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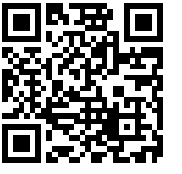

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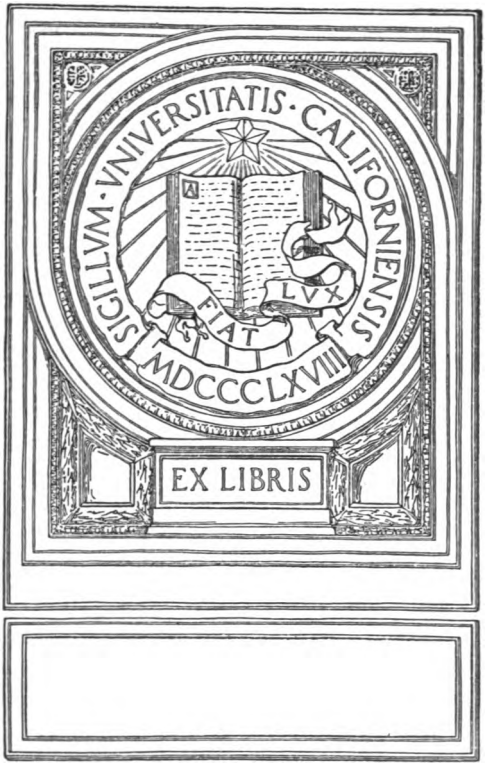

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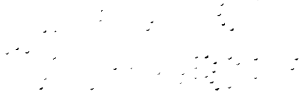

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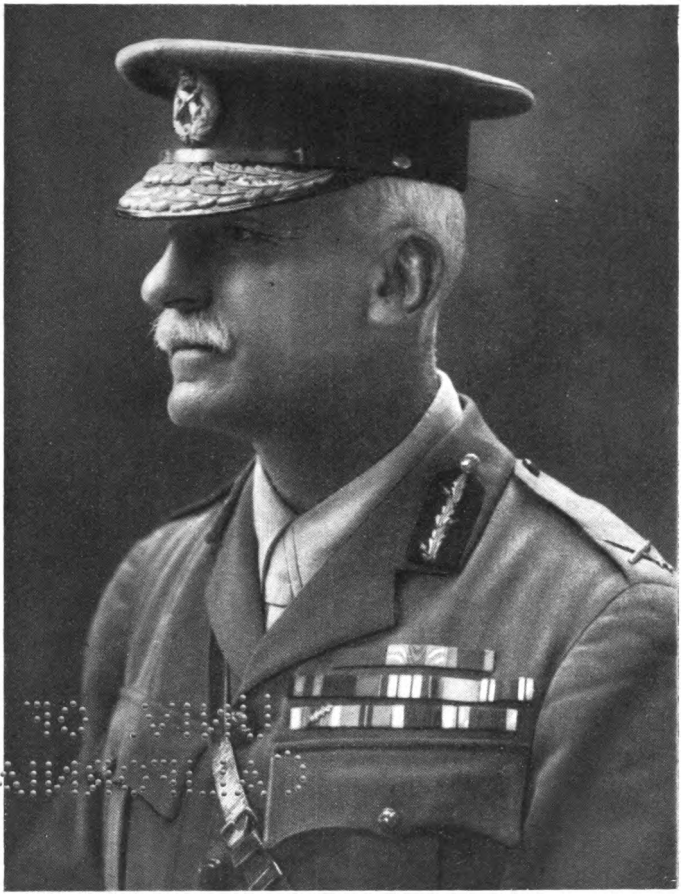

THE AUTHOR.

Frontispiece.

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SOME RAMBLES OF A SAPPER

BY

Brigr.-Genl. H. H. AUSTIN, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.
Author of "With Macdonald in Uganda,"
"A Scamper through the Far East," etc.

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To
MY WIFE AND CHILDREN

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PREFACE

When the mature age of sixty has been reached after a fairly strenuous life, it is permissible, perhaps, for one to ponder over experiences of the past ; and even commit to paper some of the memories that flock to the mind, should they seem to the ruminator as rather out of the common run. Not that the following pages pretend to portray any notable achievements on the part of the writer ; but they may serve, at least, to give brother-officers—and many other readers, I hope—an idea of the variety of activities that have fallen to the lot of one ordinary member of a distinguished Corps, in which it was his privilege to soldier for more than thirty-three years.

H. H. A.

SOUTHBOURNE-ON-SEA,
July, 1928.

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SOME RAMBLES OF A SAPPER

CHAPTER I

WHEN A BOY

Born on the right bank of the broad Irrawaddy at Thayetmyo in June, 1868, the succeeding six years of my life were spent in Lower Burma and Southern India. Although I lay no claim to a clear-cut recollection of the sequence of events during that period of my boyhood, yet certain incidents of those days still dwell, for some strange reason, within the recesses of the brains vouchsafed me. Such memories have, doubtless, been reinforced to some extent by lively stories of Indian experiences, more than fifty years ago, related by my mother to us children in the homeland during much of our schooldays. Thus it seems little less than a miracle that my elder brother and I should have passed unscathed through our childhood in Burma ; for on several occasions we appear to have both narrowly escaped being bitten by cobras, whilst playing in blissful ignorance of our danger beneath the bungalow erected on piles. But to me that brief portion of my life remains a complete blank.

Nevertheless, I do retain a recollection of travelling by bullock-cart up the Nilgiris with our parents, when little more than two, and being immensely struck by the first waterfall I had ever seen. In later years my father used to tell me that he and my mother were much

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astonished by my pointing excitedly at the phenomenon and exclaiming, "Tota talum, tota talum," which, I believe, is the Tamil or Telugu for "Water falling, water falling"; though why I should have expressed my surprise in a foreign tongue, I cannot say. In any case, I do not know one single word of either language now, so presumably had acquired an infantile smattering of it from the ayah, or our good friend Rajah Gopal, the butler.

Another event which is engraven on my memory occurred not long after, close beside the compound of our bungalow at French Rocks, a small cantonment in Southern India abandoned many years ago. Just beyond one end of this commodious compound was a large tank, a common feature in that part of India, constructed for the storage of rain water, and enclosed on three sides by high, steep earthen banks. The water could, however, be approached with comparative ease from the fourth side; and I am afraid my brother and I were not infrequently attracted by the forbidden margin of this miniature lake. How we managed to elude the servants of the household on this particular occasion, I do not remember; but we two imps were thoroughly enjoying ourselves by the water-side when my brother, who was a couple of years older than me though only five or six, suddenly decided to paddle. What with the water deepening more rapidly than he had expected, and the mud at the bottom, he very soon found himself in serious difficulties, and losing his balance fell face downwards into the tank.

His efforts to regain his feet proved fruitless, and his head disappeared several times below the surface. Genuinely alarmed by now, we both began to scream and yell at the top of our voices, I continuously, and he between splutters of expelling the stagnant water from his lungs. Providentially our father happened to return

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from parade in his white uniform just then; and hearing our blood-curdling shrieks, on reaching the bungalow, leapt off his horse and hurried to the spot. He arrived none too soon; dashed booted and spurred into the tank and retrieved his first-born from what would shortly have been a watery grave, but for his timely appearance. Father and son were a sorely mud-bespattered pair, as may be imagined, when the limp lad, borne to the bungalow in his parent's arms, was deposited on his bed to be gradually brought back to life.

We fought rather shy of the tank thereafter; and before long our impressionable young minds were perplexed by the real presence of death, for the first time. This was brought the more vividly home to us because we thereby lost the companionship of little Claudie Walker, an intimate playmate of ours. We had been accustomed to forgather with him every afternoon at the small station Club, listening to the band together, building mud castles, and generally indulging in the pranks common to lads of our age, when one sad day arrived without Claudie at the Club. We were told he was sick, but would soon be able to join us in our romps again. Day succeeded day, however, and still no Claudie came to play; and when at last it was broken to us that the little fellow now was dead and would never play with us again, we hardly realized what was meant. But I distinctly remember his small coffin being borne through the cantonment with military honours to the tiny station cemetery that evening, preceded by the band of his father's regiment playing a solemn funeral march to the graveside where his poor mortal remains were laid.

Our ayah, of course, spoilt us boys dreadfully, as most ayahs do the children committed to their charge. But she holds no outstanding place in my memory; whereas our butler, the sturdy and faithful Rajah Gopal,

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and Ramaswami, the "boy," I see in my mind's eye yet as staunch friends of our childhood. My elder brother and I rather regarded the former as chief purveyor of good things, I fear; for rarely did he set forth to the bazaar to make the necessary purchases for the day's commissariat but we would burst into song before him. The burden of our refrain, repeated *ad infinitum*, ran "Rajah Gopal, bring sweetmeats; Rajah Gopal, bring sweetmeats," which injunction he would smilingly acknowledge until almost out of hearing of our piping voices.

Ramaswami was the stalwart youth who frequently accompanied us on our walks abroad; and what he didn't know about the flying of kites, and other joys dear to the hearts of young exiles in the East, was not worth knowing. But perhaps what we revelled in most was watching, under his ægis, immense native processions on certain Hindu festival occasions. These, to us, were indescribably weird and wonderful shows; for behind the ornate tinsel-bedecked models of temples, borne on the shoulders of gangs of natives, would be seen a human tiger or two. These awe-inspiring creatures were naked save for a loin-cloth, their faces, bodies and limbs being painted over with gaudy stripes of yellow, green and red in faint resemblance to those ferocious denizens of the jungle. And to the incessant "dun-dunnakah-dunnock, dun-dunnakah-dunnock" of the drums these athletic actors leapt about, darted hither and thither, snarling and growling amid the gay throng, in rough imitation of the man-eaters they were supposed to represent. As may be imagined, we small lads at the side of the road generally received an especially vigorous display of the "tigers' " activities when they arrived opposite us.

A common feat we used to see performed in those days, but which I do not remember to have witnessed

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in later life in India, was for a "tiger" to stoop down and seize with his teeth a standing sheep, by the skin on the small of its back. Lifting the animal bodily from the ground in his mouth, and with a quick jerk of his shoulder and neck muscles, the "tiger" would hurl the inoffensive beast high in the air over his own head—to the accompaniment of vociferous applause by the onlookers. But why he did not break his own neck in the process was always a cause of astonishment to us boys.

In the days of which I write, the small cantonment we graced with our presence was many miles distant from the nearest railway station; so when our parents decided it was about time their progeny should be deported to England, as my elder brother was approaching his eighth birthday, roofed-in bullock-carts had to be utilized for conveying the crowd to the train. The journey entailed travelling day and night for several days on end; and my father, unfortunately, was prevented by his military duties from accompanying us. Part of the country traversed had, not long before, been the haunt of thugs and dacoits, and tigers roamed the jungles through which the road ran. It was not altogether a cheerful undertaking, therefore, for an unarmed young matron, with four small children, to embark upon, despite the esteemed company of the ayah and our good friend Ramaswami to lend a hand en route.

The convoy consisted of four carts, two loaded to the roof with baggage, and the other two providing lying-down accommodation for my mother, the ayah and us four encumbrances. The baggage led the van, and then came the cart with Ramaswami and us two eldest boys, closely followed by that occupied by our mother, ayah and the two babes—in the post of danger. Tigers and dacoits had, at all costs, to be kept at a distance; so whilst penetrating particularly lonely tracts by night,

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my mother hit upon the somewhat original artifice of pinching in turn her small sons sharing her bullock-dandy, thereby extorting howls of anguish at intervals from the disturbed slumberers. The idea did credit to maternal instinct, being based on the assumption that no dacoits would venture to molest a bullock train containing Europeans, a white baby's cries being entirely different, apparently, from those of a native child. Tigers, too, were seemingly expected to discern the difference and would be far too cunning to run the risk of receiving a bullet from a white man's rifle by approaching the convoy closely. Anyhow, we reached the railway without mishap; and our mother's acumen had doubtless enabled my elder brother and me to profit from the pain inflicted on our juniors—in accordance with the just law of primogeniture.

Fresh wonders at Madras. The good ship *Othello*, Hull, in which our passages were booked, was riding at anchor out in the open roadstead; and when pointed out to me I innocently inquired, "Is that England, then?" England, I had been told, was a small island, and entirely surrounded by the sea; so this was our journey's end at last, for here was the sea, and that surely the small island set in the midst of it.

But no; still more excitements to swallow as we launched through the surf in the lively *masowlah* boat, the spray being flung high up all round us before we entered the calmer waters beyond, and there hoisted sail for our ocean home of the next few weeks. What a plethora of marvels for our young minds! A gently rocking castle of iron now—floating, too! "Dear us! What next?" we wondered, as we scrambled, or were carried, up the ship's gangway to the deck high above the water.

Our capacity for astonishment seemed almost exhausted. The flickering spark was fanned into flame,

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however, on observing two huge wooden cases on the main deck, behind the stout iron bars of whose fronts two full-grown tigers were penned, their cruel eyes devouring with hungry looks the little white-faced boys gazing open-mouthed at them from a respectful distance. Near by, more cages and crates, containing jungle-cats, monkeys, parrots and other animals that escape my memory—a regular menagerie, in fact, destined for various Zoological Gardens in England. We boys were certainly going to be in clover during the voyage, with wild animals to watch when in want of excitement to while away weary hours on board ship.

I fear, however, we three elder children were a source of constant anxiety to our mother and the ayah; for there was little of the "angels without wings" about us. When the chief officer gave my elder brother and me a sound spanking, though, after rescuing us from walking along the ship's side outside the rails, over which we had clambered whilst our mother and the other passengers were down below at tiffin, and the ayah momentarily absent—with the baby, I suppose—we did not risk our lives again in that manner. Further spankings were received, however, and thoroughly deserved, no doubt, owing to an insatiable desire on our part to swarm up shrouds, and endanger our limbs in other foolish ways.

My younger brother, not to be outdone by his elders' pranks, light-heartedly devoured the inflammatory ends of a number of matches one day, when alone and unobserved, with the result that he poisoned his system, and broke out into a fine crop of sores all over his face. He was still a sweet-looking object on arrival in England, where five maiden aunts eagerly awaited the advent of their sister and four brand-new nephews from the Gorgeous East. I doubt if the dear ladies thought much of the gang at first sight.

And so at length the Suez Canal was reached. Few

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of the passengers on board had entered it before, as it had only been opened for traffic some three years previously; and in those days parents spent longer spells as exiles in the East without coming home than they ever dream of doing now. It was more than nine years since our mother had left England and journeyed round the Cape by herself, to be married on arrival in India. Steaming slowly for several days up this narrow cut through a howling wilderness of sand lingers in my memory yet; but nothing of the latter part of the voyage can I recall up to the time we landed in England, and became engulfed amid millions of our own race.

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CHAPTER II

GROWING UP

For some time after landing at Southampton our minds became decidedly chaotic in the crowded streets of England; and what I chiefly associate with the homeland, during the first year or so, is living in various lodgings in Clifton, close to where our handsome old grandmother, and her several unmarried daughters, resided. We made the acquaintance, too, of my father's uncle, Major Thomas Austin, and his family, he being an octogenarian who had lost a leg at the Siege of Antwerp in 1814, and whom we frequently met stumping along the roads. Some extracts from his interesting old diaries were recently arranged by me and published, since they give a vivid account of what the old gentleman went through as a young subaltern when campaigning in the Low Countries more than 100 years ago.[1]

My father at length obtained a year's leave from India and joined us in the summer of 1875. We two elder boys were then transferred from the dame's school we had been attending to a Preparatory School under the Rev. Henry Rudge; and there we were left as boarders, after the summer holidays we all spent together at Seaton, whilst our parents took the two younger ones to the west coast of Ireland, where my father had rented a small shooting and fishing lodge for six months, at Mulraney, County Mayo.

Whilst in Ireland my parents were blessed with

[1] *Old "Stick-leg"* (Geoffrey Bles, 1926).

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twins, a boy and a girl, so our numbers were gradually mounting up; and as my father had nothing but his pay on which to bring up his progeny, the sacrifices he and my mother had to make to feed, clothe and educate us all were probably never fully realized by us youngsters until we were nearly grown up. Fortunately, our mother was an excellent manager, of a bright and cheerful disposition. We certainly owed her much; and those of us who survive will ever retain fond memories of all she was to us throughout her strenuous, unselfish life.

When my mother sailed for India again to join my father with the twins, then about eighteen months old, my elder brother and I remained in charge of Mr. Rudge. He possessed a charming personality, and we spent several happy years at his school, especially enjoying the holidays, when there were usually three or four other boys left in his care; so we got up concerts, theatricals, and such like, to amuse ourselves.

Eventually, when I was 12½ and my elder brother nearly 14½, the Rev. Henry Rudge received instructions from our parents in India to send us to the Bedford County School, of which my father had heard favourable reports from a brother-officer; one of its main attractions being, no doubt, the small fees demanded for boys—something like £40 per annum, I believe.

It was a bleak wintry day in January, 1881, when my brother and I set forth from our cosy surroundings, and second home, at Luccombe House, Redland Green, for Bristol station, and the long weary railway journey to Bedford. The whole country was in the grip of one of the severest spells of frost that I can remember as a boy; and what with the waits and changes en route, we were a thoroughly frozen, home-sick pair of youngsters by the time we reached the North-Western railway station at Bedford. There we chartered a cab and drove with our belongings to the County School, situated

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some two miles from the town out in the country. The Ouse was fast frozen over, and booths erected on the ice to supply the wants of numerous skaters of all ages who were disporting themselves on the solid stream. The river-side was alive with schoolboys, for the Bedford Grammar School and the Bedford Modern School were both located in the town, and a very large proportion of the hundreds of pupils at each were day-boys, whose parents and guardians resided in Bedford. It was otherwise with the County School, where boarders alone were taken, the majority of whom were the sons of farmers and people of small means, living at some distance from Bedford.

As we drove into the country the prospects grew bleaker, colder and more wintry looking; so we were relieved to find ourselves dumped down at length before a huge pile of red-brick buildings facing the road, which was to be our *alma mater* for the next five terms.

On being conducted to the presence of the Headmaster, the Rev. C. W. Bourne,[1] in his wing of the block, we tramped through long corridors on whose walls hung great boards, bearing names of illustrious students in gold, distinguished either for scholarship or sport in the past. But what grated on our boyish minds was that the term "Middle Class" County School figured prominently on all these notices. That was quite a shock to us, I remember, because we imagined, in our youthful pride, we were of the "Upper Class," as the sons of an officer. Consequently, we began to picture ourselves as having to associate with lads of the National School type, whom we had sometimes been compelled formerly to fight, in order to protect ourselves against their uncalled-for attacks in the Clifton roads. This thought made us still more miserable.

[1] He only died in December, 1927, at the age of 81.

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Our fears were groundless, however. The head-master received us very kindly, and passed us on to the Rev. Brearley Sandberg, the house-master of the Whit-bread dormitory, in which we remained throughout our stay at Bedford. Mr. Sandberg became an Army Chaplain in later years, and both my brother and I met him while in that capacity at Karachi, fifteen years afterwards. We passed a happy time at Elstow School, as it was afterwards called; and were quite sorry when the day arrived to bid it good-bye, on my brother going to Westward Ho! and I to Clifton College, in September, 1882.

About a year prior to our leaving Bedford, my mother returned to England with the twins and a seventh child, born in Burma a short time before. My two younger brothers were then at Rudge's as boarders; and when my elder brother went off to Westward Ho! (where Kipling, Stalky & Co. flourished at the time) I entered Clifton College as a day-boy in North Town House. Matters were much complicated owing to my youngest brother, the twin, having become paralysed below the waist while out in India. The twins were a perfectly healthy, well-developed pair when they went out with my mother, and what brought about this distressing state of affairs will probably never be known. I cannot help thinking, though, that the little fellow must have been dropped by his ayah, some time out in the East, thereby injuring the spine, and causing him ultimately to lose all power in his legs. The result was that when my mother returned to England with these three children, the boy could do no more than crawl, dragging his poor wasted legs after him.

All sorts of specialists were consulted in London, and various contrivances employed at their suggestions; but nothing in the nature of any real improvement was ever effected. And yet he lived on for years, the happiest,

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cheeriest little soul one can possibly imagine, notwithstanding his grave disability. This necessitated his being carried, or wheeled, about everywhere, except when he crawled about the house, and even pulled himself, at times, up and down the stairs by his arms alone. The boy had a beautiful face, and was a born songster, with a wonderful ear for music, though he had never been taught. After hearing a song two or three times, however, he would sing it with absolute confidence, as true as a bell, and in a powerful treble voice that was truly remarkable in so small a child, and of so abnormal a frame.

It will be apparent that, with all these additional expenses to meet while slaving out in India to support his family in England, my father was seldom able to afford to come home on leave. I was 8 when he returned to the East, and not until I was 16, and shortly about to go up for Woolwich, did he pay another visit to the old country—in the summer of 1884.

The traditions and splendid standing of Clifton College are so generally known that for me to dilate on the school would be superfluous. Our Headmaster was the Rev. J. M. Wilson, the successor to Dr. Percival, its first head, who had reigned from 1862 to 1879.

"Jimmy" Wilson, though 92 years of age, still survives as Canon of Worcester Cathedral; and I shall always feel that he brought some solace into my young life when he prepared me for confirmation soon after I entered the College. Hell and Everlasting Damnation for evil-doers seemed then to be a more or less accepted doctrine in the Church, so it was most comforting to hear from so high an authority as our Headmaster that, to suppose God would punish finite sin with eternal torture was to credit the Almighty with a harshness and injustice totally incompatible with His love and compassion for us weak mortals.

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The two and a half years spent by me at Clifton were very happy ones, for I worked hard and played hard, without distinguishing myself in any way; though I did represent my house in most things, cricket, football, fives, and so on. I also got a place in the school Gymnasium VIII, won a few prizes at the Sports for under-16 events, and one solitary form prize. With Woolwich as my goal, I transferred to the Military and Engineering side of the school when I had climbed to the Lower Fifth on the Modern side, and then came directly under the tuition of Messrs. H. S. Hall and Stevens. As is well known, they have written together many books on mathematics, algebra, trigonometry, Euclid, etc., some of which my sons are using at their schools to-day, more than forty years since I left Clifton. It may be judged, therefore, that what we gathered under their guidance were pearls of the purest water.

Shortly after my sixteenth birthday, my father at length returned to England on another year's leave. As we four elder boys had not seen him for eight years, he arrived in some sense a stranger to us; and we had to make his acquaintance all over again, as it were, during the few months he was among us. He became deeply attached to his poor crippled son whilst at home; and it is a curious fact that he died on the same day as his youngest son passed away, December 6th, though nearly thirty years later.

I was steadily working all the while for Woolwich, the competition for which was then severe; but there was no intention of my going up for the exam. before another year, these being held in December and June annually. Early in the spring of 1885, however, the Penjdeh affair seemed likely to lead to war between England and Russia, and all officers of the Indian Army home on leave were recalled. An additional entrance examination for Woolwich had been announced shortly

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before, fifty cadetships being offered for competition; and my father decided that I had better have a shot for one of them, as it would give me some experience for the future, even if I failed at this attempt.

My masters at the College held out little hope of my gaining one of the cadetships, but agreed it could do me no harm to present myself for examination. A month or so before it took place I dreamed a dream. In it I was travelling by train, and reading the *Standard*. Suddenly my eyes alighted upon the Woolwich list, and running down the names I beheld mine standing 48th; while immediately below me came some name beginning with "H", but which I had not completely deciphered when I awoke with the joy of it all—merely to find it was but a dream! However, I told my father and mother in the morning, and thought little more about it just then.

In due course I went up to London with them, this being my first visit to the Metropolis; and my father accompanied me to Woolwich to attend my medical examination. Whilst waiting in the gymnasium there, he and a Colonel Ogilvie mutually recognized each other, though they had not met for more than twenty years. Colonel Ogilvie had also brought up his son, a Cheltenham boy, for the exam., and he was expected to pass in the first three; which he did, right well. All who survived the medical inspection sat a day or two later at Burlington House for the examination proper; but my father had to sail for India after the first day's written papers, in which I was able to tell him I thought I had done fairly well. The exam. was carried out in two phases, and those who failed in any one paper during the first week were not permitted to continue with the rest. It was with fear and trembling, therefore, that I opened the blue envelope received at the close of the first week; and my mother's joy and mine were great

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on learning that I could present myself for the final stages of the competition.

The strain was severe for a lad under 17, and at the close of the fortnight's test I went straight down to Bournemouth to recuperate at the house of my grandmother, then living there with three of my aunts. Ogilvie also went to stay with aunts at Bournemouth, and as his and mine were friends I saw a good deal of him during the fortnight we spent at the sea; so I told him one day of my dream.

The morning I returned to Clifton I bought the *Standard* to read in the train, little imagining that the Woolwich list would be published so soon. But to my surprise it was just out; and after spotting Ogilvie's name near the top, I dropped my eyes to the bottom. There I was, all right, 48th, with "E. H. Haig" next below!

Almost the first remark Ogilvie made to me when we met at Paddington by chance, on our way to join "The Shop" in May, was "How extraordinary that dream of yours coming true! As soon as I found my name I looked for yours at 48th, and there you were."

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CHAPTER III

AT "THE SHOP"

General Sir J. F. M. Browne, K.C.B., an old Crimean veteran, was the Commandant of the Royal Military Academy; and joining at Woolwich in those days, as a boy of some standing, perhaps, in a big Public School, was certainly calculated to dispel any conceit lingering in the new-comer. One was treated as dirt by those who were already established as cadets at the Academy; and all fresh arrivals were designated by the opprobrious title of "Snookers" throughout the first term of their instruction in military matters; while "hocksters," or extra drills, were received from the Corporals of the last term for very trifling lapses, a speck of dust on one's blue uniform being quite sufficient to merit their contempt and punishment. Thus would be seen a feverish brushing of each other by cadets, prior to every parade for meals, in order to dodge the deadly drills at dawn which were so freely meted out by Corporals, when inspecting their squads before marching them in to the dining-hall. Even so, Corporals were not always "just beasts," and if they had "downs" on particular cadets, they could make the lives of those youths thoroughly miserable by a continuous dose of "hocksters," no matter how spotless their uniforms might in reality be.

All this was especially good for the haughty, and probably good for every one; for they quickly realized that whatever they may have imagined themselves to be at school, they were mere mud here—until they proved

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themselves to the contrary by gaining a place in the cricket XI, football XV, or in some other equally athletic direction. Mental ability was taken no stock of by the other cadets, as a general rule. Character and action, not brains, claimed priority in their estimation; and at that age they were probably right. Hence it was a proud day, indeed, for a Snooker when he obtained his Shop colours for some branch of sport, and could swagger around with the other great ones in the gymnasium, while the Royal Artillery band discoursed dance music, two nights in the week after dinner, for cadets to do the light fantastic together. The less gifted Snookers had, meanwhile, to content themselves with sitting about on the benches at the side, watching with envy the revels of others, until their apprenticeship had been served and they could partake of the fun and frolic freely from their second term onwards.

Personally, I failed to display any particular prowess in the athletic world as a Snooker, my sole success being to run a dead-heat in the Quarter-mile Hurdles at the Sports soon after our advent. My attempts to get some cricket, at which I rather fancied myself as a wicket-keeper, were doomed to end dismally. The captain of cricket happened to be the Corporal of the house in which some dozens of us were located, three in a room as being Snookers, and when cricket commenced he visited each of the rooms in his house in turn, to inquire if there were any cricketers among us.

On this question being put to our room, I replied, "Well, I play a bit." "Where were you at school?" came the query. "At Clifton." "Were you in the school XI?" "No, but I hoped I might get in this summer as a wicket-keep, if I had gone back." "Oh!" scathingly; but he continued, "Well, you can put your name down as wishing to play on the lists which will be sent round periodically."

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This I did, with the greatest regularity; but never once was I tried in the pick-up games arranged to test the new material! In fact, during the whole of that summer at the Shop, I rarely had a bat or ball in my hand, as the captain steadfastly refused to include my name in any trial game, presumably because I had the audacity to say I could play cricket "a bit" when I was not even in my school XI. I trust I am not vindictive, but I had my revenge later in the season; for, during the vacation, I joined the Bournemouth Cricket Club, and our recent Shop captain, now a young subaltern in the Field Battery at Christchurch, played for other teams again us several times, when it gave me much satisfaction to stump him on nearly every occasion.

The following summer I had better luck, as our new captain, A. P. Douglas, who played for Surrey whilst a cadet at Woolwich, was in my batch and gave me a trial, with the result that I received my XI colours as a wicket-keeper; and took part in the thrilling match of 1886 against Sandhurst, when they beat us by one run.

After my pointed snub in connection with cricket, I was not such an ass, in my second term at the Shop, as to say that I could play football, seeing I had not got my cap at Clifton. I merely mumbled, therefore, that I was fond of the game, and would be glad if a place could be found for me as half-back in the trials. One of the previous year's halves was still available, so there remained but the one vacant position; and as a cadet of my batch came up with a big reputation from his school as a half, there seemed small prospect of my getting into the team. As luck would have it, however, I played opposite to him in the first trial; but he, being a powerful thick-set fellow, insisted on trying to barge his way past me, instead of feeding his three-quarters freely on obtaining the ball from the scrum. As he seldom succeeded in his object, his tactics did not meet

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with the approval of the captain of the Shop XV, a three-quarter himself; for the latter, much to my surprise, visited me in my room that evening to give me some encouragement on what he had seen of my play. And one of the proudest moments of my life, before or since, was when our captain touched me on the shoulder one evening in the large dining-hall, as he and the other Corporals were filing through to theirs, and said, "You can take your cap, Austin. Best congratulations." That was more than forty years ago, and the thrill of it still survives; while the cap immediately procured by me is among my most treasured possessions yet.

The next year I took up my position in the three-quarter line, as most of them of the 1885–86 team had passed out of the Shop; and in that position I always afterwards played for the R.E. team at Chatham until I left for India, early in 1889. It was my good fortune, too, to represent Woolwich against Sandhurst in the Sports of 1886, when I was the Woolwich first string in the Long Jump; but I was easily beaten by my R.M.C. opponent. Such also was the fate of our football XV both years that I played for the Shop against Sandhurst.

I was most anxious to get into the Royal Engineers, which meant that I should have to pass out probably among the first fifteen of my batch; and this had been increased to sixty-eight in number, owing to cadets in batches above failing in their end of term exams., and dropping back to ours. As I was one of the youngest and almost the bottom of our batch, on entering Woolwich, I confess I never ceased slaving deep into the night, and nearly nightly, thus steadily gaining a few places at each successive end of term exams. At the commencement of our last term, therefore, I found myself 14th, and determined to retain that place if midnight oil would enable me to do so, even after a vigorous football match.

There was a strict rule, however, against lights being

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kept up by any cadets, including Under-officers and Corporals in their last term, after "Lights out" sounded, and the gas turned off at the main in each house, which was then locked from without. To ensure that this order was rigidly observed, watchmen used to prowl round the buildings at uncertain hours during the night; and the burner of any light in his room, detected infringing the regulation, was immediately reported and hauled up before the Adjutant at Orderly Room next day.

Salving my conscience by assuring myself that, though a Corporal, the end, Sappers, justified the means, midnight oil, I set myself to outwit the uncanny seekers after law-breakers, by rigging up on my table a huge portfolio, between the wings of which my lamp threw down beams of light on the object of my study. Ensconced behind the protection of this tall shade, with my thick curtains drawn across the window, I would pore over my books up to all hours of the night; though my ears remained keenly on the alert to catch the sound of any stealthy approach on the gravel walk without. At the slightest crunch of a footstep, the lamp would be lowered so that the merest flicker of light lingered in my cubby-hole, and such as would certainly not be discernible from outside; whilst I held my breath until the danger passed. As soon as the footsteps receded, up would go the lamp again, and my studies resumed until danger again threatened, or I judged it time to snatch some sleep before the labours of the coming day. It was anxious work, but probably the means of my passing out 13th into the Royal Engineers.

The ordinary routine at the Shop as regards outdoor work, with its parades, gun-drill, gymnastics, sketching, and so on, was sufficient of itself, of course, to keep the average cadet fit, even if he showed no aptitude for games; whilst, during our last two terms there, instruction in riding was added to our other accom-

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plishments, in the R.A. riding schools, to which we were marched down. We got plenty of exercise in these covered-in ménages, beyond a doubt. Still, the methods employed by the old type of vituperative riding-masters, and their rough-riders, to teach gentlemen-cadets how to ride were, in my opinion, the very reverse of likely to instil a desire in the breast of a tyro to acquire the indispensable art of horsemanship. These autocrats seemed to take a special delight in making the lot of a novice a perfect hell by placing him on the roughest steeds when riding without stirrups; and then, whilst the miserable wretch vainly struggled to retain his seat on a slippery saddle, on trotting out, flicking the horse with a long whip, maliciously intending that the rider should be ignominiously deposited on the tan, or flung with considerable violence against the wooden side of the ménage. Many cadets absolutely loathed riding school, therefore, for the first six months or so; and I never really enjoyed it until my last term at the Shop.

We were never taught to rise in our stirrups, but just bumped round the beastly school by the hour, sweating profusely, sitting up like statues, and taking much out of both horse and rider unnecessarily. As one result of these archaic methods, when I landed in India I had to teach myself to rise in my stirrups, and ride as nature intended man to—helping his horse, not hindering it. I learned from my painful experience at the Shop, however, how riding should *not* be taught; and thirty-years later when I became first Commandant of the Cadet College started at Quetta, as a war measure, and a senior riding-master from Woolwich joined my staff to teach the cadets equitation, I put my views very clearly before him. He was told that I was not going to have any old Shop methods introduced here, and that I personally would attend riding lessons to see that they were not.

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He entirely agreed with all I said, and assured me I would have no fault to find with his methods; and I here gladly state that he taught riding magnificently, for the boys soon loved their lessons, and used to accompany him on voluntary rides about the country-side in their leisure hours. These cadets had to be passed through Quetta in six months, and could only have riding instruction during their last three. Few of them had ever been on a horse before; and yet when they passed out I was able to invite Quetta society to witness a display of horsemanship by the cadets. These youths rode bare-backed over jumps, with their arms folded, vaulted on and off horses trotting and cantering round the ménages, tent-pegged with swords, severed the Turk's head, and wound up proceedings with an excellent musical ride, carrying lances and pennants, to the wonder of the gathering; and particularly of the Divisional General, a cavalry officer, who kept expressing himself to me throughout the afternoon as astonished with all he saw, as the result of three months' instruction only in riding. Just the difference between sympathy and harshness on the part of the riding-master!

Needless to say, I was always hard up at Woolwich; for the 2*s.* 6*d.* weekly pocket-money allowed me by my parents had to keep me in tobacco, mineral waters, and such luxuries as I could from time to time afford; besides paying certain out-of-pocket expenses in connection with cricket and football outings, the Shop dances, and so on. Nevertheless, it was admirable training in learning the value of money; and in spite of my impecuniosity I occasionally managed a pit at one of the London theatres on a Saturday evening after a football match. The least one could do the trip on was 1*s.* 10*d.* 2nd-class return from Woolwich to Charing Cross, plus 2*s.* 6*d.* for the scrummage to get into the pit. Great days!

Our home football matches took place on the Wool-

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wich lines in front of the R. A. Barracks, and were usually attended by hundreds of Arsenal hands who were keen supporters of the Shop. They had nicknames for most of the team, such as "Ginger," "Cheese" and so forth, which they would bawl out vociferously when its bearer performed any meritorious act on the field. If bound for London, I generally had to elbow my way through this enthusiastic crowd to the pavilion, snatch up my greatcoat and dash off to the Shop to have a hot bath, and change into plain clothes before swallowing some tea prepared by my servant in my room. Thus refreshed, and with 4*s.* 6*d.* at the most in my pocket, I would set out to walk the couple of miles to the Dockyard Station —a hansom from the Shop was far beyond my means, even if I had to carry a bag for a week-end visit to friends in town. Arrived at Charing Cross, I was usually met by some brother-cadet who had perhaps gone up to town earlier in the afternoon; and together we would proceed to the theatre of our choice, mix with the throng before the pit-door, and be forced to struggle like devils possessed when it was opened, in order to get seats at all. The performance over, a dreary train left Charing Cross somewhere about 11.30 p.m. and landed us at Woolwich three-quarters of an hour later; so it was generally close on 1 a.m., and we hungry and tired, by the time the Shop was reached, walking back across the Common. Yet I used to think it well worth while, and that it had been a delightful evening out, though not one sou remained in my pocket, as 2*d.* had gone in the programme. One couldn't cut it much finer.

Not being quick in the up-take, and perhaps duller than most of the cadets, the two years spent at the Shop had been a period of real hard work for me, in order to obtain Sappers. I was unrestrainedly pleased, therefore, when the final exams. had been successfully passed and I found myself comfortably in the R.E. list on

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February 16th, 1887. For some reason the old Duke of Cambridge was unable to visit the Shop on my last Duke's Day, and deliver his usual pithy, outspoken homily to the cadets passing out; so prizes were presented, and commissions approved, by Lord Wolseley, who, not long back from his Egyptian campaign, strongly advised us all to take every opportunity of getting shot, if we desired advancement in the army.

And so we dispersed; I thankful that my labours for the present were over, but parting with great regret from many amusing companions who would not be among our numbers at Chatham, since their future careers lay with the Royal Artillery.

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CHAPTER IV

LAUNCHED

The early spring of 1887 found twenty of us late cadets of the R.M.A., Woolwich, five of whom were Old Cliftonians, assembled as full-blown Second-Lieutenants in the Royal Engineers at Brompton Barracks, Chatham. We were still worms, of course, being humble "Y.O.'s" (young officers), who had yet to go through two years' further training before we could be regarded as capable of doing any credit to the Corps to which we now had the honour to belong. We were not quite the mud, however, that we could not but know ourselves to be when we joined at Woolwich as "Snookers"; for we had acquired some lowly form of life and a rudimentary insight into the military art before our advent at Chatham, though a knowledge of Military Engineering had yet to be implanted in our opaque skulls. Moreover, we had now banking accounts of our own at Messrs. Cox & Co., to whom a grateful country doled out monthly on our behalf 5*s.* 7*d.* a day, plus 2*s.* extra pay as the daily engineer allowance for our exalted positions. In all, under £140 p.a., of which something over £100 a year vanished in mess bills, and compulsory subscriptions, of even the most economical; and this in the best-paid branch of the service at the time.

Nevertheless, I had much to be thankful for. My good parents had made, and were yet making, great sacrifices for the children they had brought into the

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world. My father, I now know, though then a Colonel, was living himself on little more than a Second-Lieutenant's pay out in India, in order that his seven sons and daughters should be properly educated and equipped for Life's battles. But none of my brothers and sisters were likely to be off his hands for some years to come, my elder brother being still a medical student, and the others all at school. Thus it was some satisfaction to me, not yet 19, to feel that I had been successfully launched by my parents on a career which promised to make me independent of their help in the near future. My father meanwhile provided me with a complete outfit in uniform from Daniels, and allowed me a further £30 p.a. to supplement my small pay during the two years I was under instruction at the School of Military Engineering at Chatham.

The latter was a good deal less than most of my batch received, but sufficed—observing rigid economy in all other directions—to pay the voluntary subscriptions for cricket, football, racquets, tennis, boating, yachting, etc., which were so pleasant a feature of our life at Chatham. The messing at Brompton Barracks in those days, however, swallowed up a vast proportion of one's pay, if one had all meals in the mess. Three of us impecunious ones, all keen on games—Ridley Boileau, Watkins and myself—clubbed together, therefore, after we had bought our financial experience during the first few months, and had breakfast, lunch and tea in our rooms, and dinner only in the mess. For this last meal we were charged 2*s.* 6*d.* whether we had it or not; so, needless to say, we had it, and made a thoroughly square meal of the good things spread before us after our frugal fare during the rest of the day. Our other slender repasts were taken in turn in each other's rooms, week by week, our respective servants' wives doing the cooking of our simple wants in their kitchens below stairs.

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Breakfast would consist, perhaps, of a rasher of bacon, a kipper, or some such succulent dish, together with tea and toast; lunch, generally of hunks of bread and cheese, and one glass of ale, for we "went a bust" on a barrel of the poor man's beer to keep up our staminas; and tea usually included Marie or some similar biscuits on which changes were rung. As there never has been anything of the epicure about me, these modest meals fulfilled my physical requirements, and I have seldom felt fitter than then; while £2 a month on messing was saved by these tactics—sufficient to pay the voluntary subscriptions towards such games as we three wished to indulge in.

Ridley Boileau remained my greatest friend through life, until he perished, alas, during the retreat from Mons, when a brilliant future seemed to lie before him. Watkins and I later shared a bungalow at Lucknow in 1893–94, but he unhappily died a short time before the War.

The two years spent at Chatham were certainly among the cheeriest of my youth. The work was extremely interesting, and mostly out of doors during the spring and summer months, when practical instruction in bridging, surveying, all kinds of field-works, camps, tours, and so on, brought much variety to our toil. The winter work, as a rule, was more technical, embracing complicated projects indoors with regard to buildings, materials, railways, water-works, electricity, and a host of other subjects that comprise the engineer's usual curriculum.

Keen as I was to become a yachtsman at Chatham, in that branch of sport I signally failed, owing to my inability to withstand attacks of sea-sickness. This weakness I have never been able to overcome, in spite of having travelled tens of thousands of miles by sea. Everything would be sheer delight so long as we were cruising down the Medway; but as soon as we entered

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the open choppy sea off Sheerness, and began to beat down to Margate or Ramsgate, say, after a few hours it was more than I could do to haul on to ropes, and I would gradually sink into a state of prostration with the continuous nausea. I proved a bit of a Jonah, too; and more than once the saucy craft I was by way of helping to man ran on to a sandbank out at sea, and we were compelled to get out the trestles to maintain her in an upright position until the tide rose sufficiently to float her off again. Still, there was some balm in these contretemps, for the only time I usually felt thoroughly nautical at sea was while we were hard and fast aground for some hours, and I had been granted the opportunity of throwing off the effects of *mal de mer* when thus on an even keel.

Life at Chatham was often greatly enlivened by cheery guest-nights, particularly when visiting cricket and football teams were entertained and added to the fun of the fair; whilst many notabilities, too, were thus honoured by the Headquarters' Mess during my time there. The old Duke of Cambridge, Lord Wolseley, and Major Kitchener, for example (just home from the Sudan and wearing a beard, to cover the wound in his throat, recently received from dervishes), were among those who dined as guests in the summer of 1887.

Prince Henry of Prussia also arrived at Chatham with a flotilla of torpedo-boats for Queen Victoria's Jubilee; and the mess received a cordial invitation for officers to go down and drink a parting glass of wine with the German naval officers, before they returned to Germany. For some reason none of our senior officers seemed disposed to visit the Docks for the purpose; so a bevy of us gay youngsters sallied forth after dinner to acknowledge the compliment, and were right royally entertained by our foreign hosts.

The four or five torpedo-boats were drawn up along-

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side each other in one of the basins; so we could walk comfortably across from one to the other on reaching the deck of the nearest by a gangway leading up to it from the quay. The after part of each boat was screened off by side awnings, and in the middle of this sheltered area was set a large table, on whose centre glistened a huge crystal bowl of champagne-cup with strawberries floating about on it; while glasses and chairs were distributed round the table, at which six to eight British and German officers seated themselves on each torpedo-boat. Our glasses were continually replenished with cup, drawn from the bowl in silver ladles, so conversation soon became free as it was conducted chiefly in English, which most of the German officers spoke with considerable fluency. I happened to be apportioned to Prince Henry's torpedo-boat, with three or four other young Sappers; and after a time he volunteered to take us below and show us over his quarters, pointing out the photograph of his fiancée, and other objects of interest in his cabin. He had evidently been greatly impressed by Britain's might on the main, as displayed at the naval review at Spithead, and in a burst of candour remarked to me, "If England and Germany would only combine, we could conquer the whole world." With which mailed-fist observation Second-Lieutenant Austin naturally agreed.

It was hardly likely that I would miss the chance of running up to town to see the show on Jubilee Day, even though I had to stand in the crowd for hours in the scorching sun, hanging on to my place near the front of the line. Needless to say, I felt well repaid for my trouble, and trust I may never forget that wonderful mounted cavalcade of most of the crowned heads of Europe, led by the splendid figure of the Emperor Frederick, and followed by the great men of our own country, which rode in advance of the Queen's carriage on that memorable day.

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The King of the Belgians was one of the few crowned absentees from among the riders, and followed in one of the State carriages behind Her Majesty; and when his coach arrived nearly opposite to where I was standing, his great bearded head was thrust out of the window, to view better, I suppose, the beautiful decorations just there. An awed silence fell for a moment on the crowd about me, as it gazed on this kingly apparition. But this was suddenly broken by a little Cockney near me bawling out, in a most friendly manner, "'Ullo, Tomkins, is that you?"

The leonine head disdained, however, to respond to this cheery greeting from my neighbour, and withdrew itself gravely into the coach, amid a roar of laughter from the little Cockney's pals, who seemed vastly amused at his ready wit.

Towards the close of my first year, I received a telegram from my mother asking me to come down to Clifton at once, if possible, as my crippled brother was seriously ill, and it was feared he was dying. Our adjutant, Captain Cedric Maxwell, R.E., kindly granted me leave immediately; so I caught the first train I could to town, and then on to Bristol. But I arrived too late, for the little fellow had breathed his last an hour before I reached home, though he had been conscious up to the end, and had inquired for me only a short while before he passed away. This was the first sad break in our family circle; and yet, in a way, one could not have wished the boy, now approaching his twelfth birthday, to linger on through a long life suffering so much, owing to his incurable affliction. I returned to Chatham after his funeral and immersed myself in work and football to drive our loss from my mind, as far as possible; for the lad had been much loved by us all on account of his patience and happy disposition under his crushing disability.

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As there were a number of vacancies, during my last year, down at Chatham Barracks, where there was a subsidiary mess for about forty R.E. officers, a quota of my batch were transferred to it by request. Most of my best friends applied for the change with me, and we formed a very chummy coterie, freed from the pomp and circumstance ordinarily surrounding the Headquarters Mess, where we only dined occasionally on gala nights. So far as I was concerned there was nothing to disturb the even tenor of my way until our second winter at Chatham; and then I had the misfortune to damage my left knee so severely that I have been much handicapped by the effects of the injury ever since.

We were away on tour at the time, visiting the Spithead forts, and our small steamer arrived off one of the circular sea-girt ones to find a barge alongside, with a supply of shells for the place. When made fast to her we had to step across from our bulwarks to those of the barge, and so down on to her deck. The sea was choppy, and as I stood up to step forward from our steamer, the roll caused me to tread inadvertently on the bottom of my long great-coat. I thus lost my balance, and my left leg became jammed up to the knee between the two bulwarks, whilst the rest of my body fell with a crash on to the deck of the barge. The strain thrown on my imprisoned knee was tremendous, and several ominous reports resounded as I fell, clearly announcing that much mischief had been done to it. The pain was excruciating, and I feared my leg must be broken at the knee-joint, when carried back on to the steamer by my comrades and laid down on the deck.

As soon as the inspection of the fort had been made by the others, we steamed off to the Isle of Wight, where the rest of the party were landed, and the steamer then conveyed me back to Southsea pier, whence I was driven to our hotel, and a naval doctor summoned.

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After examining the limb, he said, "Hm, I'm sorry for you that your leg was not broken."

"Thanks very much," I replied, "but I can assure you that it is quite painful enough without that being added to my troubles."

"That may be," he answered, "but if your leg had been broken we could have probably mended it all right; whereas I am afraid you are going to be wedded to this for life, because the tendons seem to have gone."

And, unfortunately, he has proved correct in his prognostication of the trouble it was likely to cause me thereafter.

In any case I was *hors de combat* for weeks with a knee nearly as big as my head; and confined thus to my room would have been weary for me, indeed, but for the kindness of Mrs. Hawthorn, the wife of Colonel Hawthorn, the C.R.E. of the district. On hearing of my accident he obtained permission from the Commandant of the S.M.E. for my removal to their house in Rochester; and there Mrs. Hawthorn looked after me as if I had been her own son. As the Hawthorns had no children, and my mother was once again with my father in India, this attention was all the more appreciated by me, and led to a friendship that only terminated at the death of Colonel and Mrs. Hawthorn some twenty years later.

As our home in Clifton was broken up when my mother returned to India, in the autumn of 1888, and the rest of the family distributed among relations for their holidays, I spent our short Christmas leave very happily at the home of my Old Cliftonian friend, Lathbury, at Alderley Edge in Cheshire. His father and mother, too, had passed all the earlier years of their lives in India; and they wished their eldest son of a large family to embark on a career in that country, on leaving Chatham. I had always intended to apply for a tour

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of service in India when our two years were up, for I had all along felt the East a-calling; and we were both fortunately able to obtain our desire, owing to favourable reports on our work at the S.M.E. when it came to a close in February, 1889.

Considerable bustle ensued on leaving Chatham, and as my parents were in India, and time short, Lathbury's father very kindly assisted me with a loan to buy certain foreign service requirements, besides presenting me with a handsome nickel-plated Webley revolver. This accompanied me everywhere for more than thirty years, to be finally stolen from my tent at night by Arabs—at the Baqubah Refugee Camp in Mesopotamia, in 1919. The parents of another O.C. of my batch, Watherston, who had always been most good to me, and frequently entertained me in town at week-ends throughout the four years their son and I had spent together at the Shop and Chatham, gave me a Sowter saddle, especially built for me. So, friends had, indeed, been extraordinarily kind in thus helping to equip me for the East; though I hoped henceforth to be off my parents' hands entirely. This I became as soon as my father repaid Mr. Lathbury's loan on my arrival in India; for from that date, I take no little pride in saying, I never cost my parents one single sou in the way of an allowance or loan.

When Boileau, Lathbury and I sailed for India, with several other sappers of our batch, in the old troopship *Malabar* from Portsmouth, at the end of February, 1889, I took out with me a little thorough-bred fox-terrier pup, purchased some three months before at Chatham. Loo and her son (with which she presented me later on) were my constant companions for some years; and I doubt if man has ever possessed two more attractive and devoted canine chums than Loo and Re proved to me in the East.

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The *Malabar* was crowded with troops, and hosts of young officers of every branch of the service, some of whom became life-long friends of mine, such as "Tommy" Scott of the 87th R.I.F., now Lieut.-General Sir T. E. Scott, K.C.B., etc. Thus we were a most cheery ship's company during the month we spent together on board, sing-songs, theatricals, and all kinds of "divarsions" enlivening the voyage to Bombay. Although it is difficult for me to believe it myself now, as I survey my sun-bitten features and white hair, I once played Buttercup in a scene from "Pinafore" at one of these "gaffs." I was then made violent love to on the stage by ship's bluejackets, who chucked me under the chin, and encircled my "wasp-like" waist with their brawny arms in true sailor fashion; while I tried to warble "I'm little Buttercup, dear little Buttercup," in a short print frock, and cast coy glances at them and the audience from beneath my tow wig!

Life on the old troopers was anything but all gaiety, however, to the scores of young officers aboard, and to the multitude of soldiers, and their wives and children—particularly east of Suez when steaming down the Red Sea, and across the Indian Ocean, where the heat below was intense. We youngsters were herded together in a huge noisome den, aptly termed "Pandemonium," the floor of which was lower than water level. And from the sides of this cockpit doors led into tiny cabins to hold three; but as the sole porthole of these dog-kennels was over the upper bunk, and only some 3 feet above water level, it could never be opened except in harbour. It may be imagined, therefore, what it was like in the tropics, when changing into our home cloth mess-kit for dinner, as few of us had provided ourselves as yet with white drill uniform, and there were no punkahs or electric fans in "Pandy" to cool our heated brows. Naturally we all slept on deck, when not engaged in

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pillow-fighting, once Suez was passed, or some of us would assuredly have perished from heat apoplexy.

But our plight was relatively enjoyable when compared with the lot of the crowds of women and children penned in the bowels of the ship. They, poor souls, had no facilities for sleeping on deck, and only survived the tortures of a second Black Hole of Calcutta by gasping for breath in their hammocks—slung across great bays 'tween decks—while divested of practically every stitch of clothing at night. It was no pleasant task, therefore, threading one's way between their hammocks in the tropics when on night-watch duty, which entailed making an entire round of the ship at intervals.

It so happened that we encountered rough weather during our run down the Red Sea, and the addition of sea-sickness to their other sufferings rendered the state of these martyrs far from enviable. It certainly sharpened the look-out of the orderly officer, too, as he picked his cautious steps under, and between, the hammocks holding these miserable victims of combined *mal de mer* and heat wave. Thus, on the whole, few regrets were expressed when Bombay hove in sight, and our voyage was over.

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CHAPTER V

"GRIFFIN" DAYS

Bombay, that wonderful, but well-known Western Gate to India, needs no description from me save to remark that the hotels in existence there, nigh on forty years ago, contained few of the luxuries to be found in most of them to-day. The old Apollo Bundar Hotel satisfied my wants sufficiently, however; while the scenes about the streets revived memories of childhood's days spent in India some fifteen years earlier, so there seemed little strange or unfamiliar in my surroundings.

Most of my fellow-travellers departed to their respective stations soon after our arrival, but I could obtain no information from the Station Staff Office as to my destination; and was kept hanging about Bombay for nearly a week before I at length received instructions to proceed to Peshawur forthwith.

As my parents were then at Bangalore, I was certainly sent about as far away from them on the Indian peninsula as I well could be; and in those days to reach Peshawur from Bombay was not quite the simple matter it is to-day, as in this journey of 1,400 miles six or seven changes were necessary. Four nights and three days were spent in the train, too, which was something of an undertaking for a youngster with no knowledge of the language of the country, or its people. Fortunately, shortly before the train started an Irish major of the A.M.S., a fellow-passenger in the *Malabar*, turned up and, to my relief,

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said he had just received orders to proceed to Peshawur also; so we shared a carriage.

On setting out for Peshawur I was unaware of any old friends being located there, besides "Tommy" Scott who had gone straight there to join his regiment on landing. Consequently I had my belongings transferred from the train to the dâk bungalow in the early morning of reaching my destination. Barely had I emerged from my tub preparatory to breakfast, however, when I heard a familiar voice calling me by name; and presently an old Chatham friend, Kirby, who had been in the country a year or more, appeared, and invited me to have my kit taken over to his bungalow. This he was sharing with two other R.E.'s, both of whom, curiously enough, I had also known at Chatham—a rare piece of luck for me, a stranger in a strange land, and not quite clear as to what to do next; for my Hibernian fellow-traveller had driven direct from the station to his A.M.S. mess.

After breakfast, therefore, a bullock-cart was summoned, and glad, indeed, was I to quit the cheerless dâk bungalow and take up my residence with Kirby, Skey and Birdwood. The last was the elder brother of the present Field-Marshal Sir William Birdwood, the Commander-in-Chief in India, who, then a most attractive subaltern in the XIth Bengal Lancers, stopped with us occasionally for the hunting in Peshawur during the following cold weather. Kirby and "Chris" Birdwood, alas, have both passed over since; so Skey and I alone remain of the small coterie of Sappers at Peshawur who used to feed in the cheery little R.F.A. Battery mess, near by. This was still further augmented by other Honorary Members belonging to the Indian Civil Service, Punjab Police, and the Civil Surgeon, so we were usually a dozen or more at dinner.

Being posted to the Military Works Department in India as an Assistant Engineer, Skey early took me down

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to the office to introduce me to our chief, the Executive Engineer, the late Lieut.-Colonel Affleck-Graves, of the Indian Army, and one of the few non-R.E. officers still employed in the Military Works. "Biddy" Graves, as he was affectionately known to all in Peshawur, was a delightful person to work under, for he had a sincere regard for Sappers who, he said, never let him down. He was a great character in many ways, and had long been in charge of the Military Works in Peshawur; whilst his fund of amusing yarns seemed inexhaustible. He was, too, a sound man at his job, but had never risen high in the Military Works because, probably, he appeared to revel in crossing swords with those in authority over him in the Department, and seldom hesitated to call a spade a spade in such controversies. He was so shrewd an old gentleman, though, that he generally won all down the line in these departmental breezes; he always stuck up for his subordinates, right or wrong, and was peculiarly ingenious in explaining away, with true Irish blarney, matters to which exception may have been taken regarding work carried out under his control. We, of course, all loved him in consequence of his consideration for our feelings and future prospects, and would do anything for him in return.

"Biddy" Graves and Colonel Warburton, of Khyber fame, were great cronies at Peshawur, though in appearance apart as the poles; the former, a fine, tall, ruddy specimen of an Irishman, and the latter, small, wiry and of dark complexion, denoting the Afghan blood in his veins. Both were equally sympathetic and friendly towards junior officers at the Club, even last-joined subalterns; and thus I soon got to know Colonel Warburton well, also.

There was a certain element of friendly rivalry between these two colonels, regarding their capacity for assimilating hot dishes; and they frequently invited each other to

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breakfast in the hot weather to test the other's salamanderic properties with respect to some newly-devised breakfast-dish. The chief ingredients of this would consist probably of chillies, cayenne, Tobasco, and a few other similar searers of the normal mouth and tongue; but neither would admit defeat to the other, so readily partook of these especially prepared fiery furnaces, and with apparent relish, keeping back with difficulty the tears from their eyes, and their hair from standing on end, whilst profuse perspiration burst forth from every pore of their bodies during these stubborn contests of endurance.

My first hot weather in the Punjab was, perhaps, one of the most trying I remember, as Peshawur from the middle of May until early in October is like an overheated oven, for the nights seem almost more oppressive than the days, even when sleeping on the roof of a bungalow under punkahs. This particular hot weather was ushered in by a rather unusual shock of earthquake; the first experienced by me, and highly unpleasant I thought it, while it lasted. Writing in my room about 3 p.m. one close sultry afternoon, I felt myself suddenly jerked upwards in my chair, and began to look beneath, imagining that Birdwood's big dog had thus rudely risen under my seat. A still more violent upheaval then caused me to glance aloft. I was out of that room in two bounds, having no wish to find the swaying walls and creaking roof descending about my ears. It was amazing with what alacrity we all collected in the compound, clear of the building. The servants, likewise, scrambled out of their quarters with much shouting in next to no time; but the tremor passed almost as quickly as it came, and owing to the elastic properties of the thick sun-dried brick walls of the edifice, few signs of this untoward disturbance were subsequently noticeable.

What with thermantidotes, punkahs, and other devices for keeping down the temperature within the bungalow,

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we managed to survive the trials of the hot weather tolerably well; thanks largely, no doubt, to maintaining one's fitness by early morning rides, visiting works in progress about cantonments, and playing racquets and tennis at the Club in the evenings, when the power of the sun had somewhat abated. Colonel Graves very rightly considered my first aim should be to learn the language, and placed the afternoons at my disposal for this purpose. So the usual *munshi* was engaged, and during the hottest hour of the day, after tiffin, this patient individual and I would pore over Urdu under the ceaseless flick and creak of the punkah. This indispensable contrivance had, alas, a peculiarly soporific effect on me, probably because I had been driven from my couch on the roof of the bungalow before 5 a.m. by the rising sun; and had then sallied forth on the morning's round up to, perhaps, close on 9, by which time the accumulating heat out of doors became extremely exhausting. Yet my tactful teacher would pretend not to notice my nodding head and heavy lids, and continue his lesson in soft dulcet tones, which still further increased my desire to sink into a profound slumber.

I was really anxious, however, to acquire a good colloquial knowledge of the language speedily, since one felt rather helpless without it, so managed to keep myself awake by indulging in short sharp walks in the room at intervals. At the end of three months, therefore, I could speak Hindustani as well, perhaps, as at any time since in my Indian life. Thus the feeling of dependence on others began gradually to fade away; though not entirely, for many of the villagers around knew no Hindustani, and spoke only Pushtu, the *lingua franca* of Pathans dwelling cist and trans-frontier in the North-West portion of our Indian possession. I resolved to take up that language, too, but at a later date; and meanwhile my old banjo also helped to kill weary afternoons of the long, long Indian

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day, until time to set forth for the Club and outdoor exercise there.

A particularly depressing feature of this hot weather was the prevalence of enteric, a number of deaths occurring among the British troops, officers and men, from this scourge of the young. In the little R.F.A. mess alone, one young gunner, Ellice, who had been at the Shop with me, died; while Harper of the Sappers was only brought to from a stroke of heat apoplexy by the merest margin, on being plunged into a bath with blocks of ice floating around him; and then he developed enteric on the top of this. Although he finally recovered, he had to be invalided home.

As Harper was the only R.E. officer with the company of Sappers, I took charge of it for a time, until "Georgie" Travers, another Sapper and Miner officer, arrived from Rurki to assume command, when I resumed my normal work. Thus commenced a long friendship with Travers; and curiously enough I was attached to this company under him five years later, on the Waziristan Expedition of 1894–95.

Happily, I managed to get a few short changes from cantonment life during this fell season of the year. Amongst others I spent ten days' leave in July with Lathbury, up at the Murree Club—my first introduction to a Himalayan hill-station, to which he was fortunate enough to be posted on his arrival in India.

The heat in the train between Peshawur and Rawalpindi had been frightful the previous night; and when the tonga from Pindi landed me at Murree in time for breakfast, it was like obtaining a fresh lease of life to find oneself 7,500 feet above sea level amid the pines. Here the air was soft and balmy, and cricket and gymkhanas were in full swing on the Gharial Flats, so little did the power of the sun at this altitude interfere with outdoor amusements, even at the height of the hot weather. Lathbury

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and I represented Clifton in the Public Schools' Racquet Tournament then on at the Club, and though we survived one or two rounds we did not reach the finals. Thus several days were devoted to riding out to the numerous camps for British troops, and their families, from Pindi; all being established amid grand scenery on the hills for a distance of a dozen miles or more from Murree.

These were under the Military Works' control of Captain H. Finnis, R.E., Lathbury's Executive Engineer, whose wife and young family were then living with him in a bungalow which my wife and I were destined to occupy twenty-four summers later, soon after our marriage. The Finnises were exceedingly kind to me during my short visit to Murree, and I was to see a good deal more of them in the autumn, though I had no idea of it then.

Little did I welcome, therefore, the setting forth on my return journey to sweltering Peshawur, the first 40 miles or so to Pindi being performed in a tonga, drawn by pairs of wretched over-worked ponies, that obviously loathed the job. It had been fairly exciting when, on the way up, we had left Pindi in the grey light of dawn; for at every changing stage, 6 or 7 miles apart, the two fresh ponies put in would steadfastly refuse to budge, jibbing, rearing, and indulging in every known equine antic, to avoid hauling the jingling contraption behind them. Their attendants would, thereupon, man the wheels of the tonga to run the vehicle against the sterns of the backing recalcitrant "quads," and a rare tussle for mastery would ensue. This usually terminated in the ponies suddenly surrendering, and giving an unexpected bound forward, nearly throwing me out of the back seat, and then careering off "hell-for-leather" along the narrow winding road, cut into the hill slopes with a steep drop of many feet probably on one side. One generally prayed that a bullock-cart might not be encountered at the next turn,

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for rocks placed along the outer edge of the road alone prevented the whole show plunging to perdition. The fury of this first charge would quickly die away, however, and the poor brutes soon sobered into a steady trot when the weight behind gradually began to tell. Such being the lively experience while ascending the Himalayas, it may be imagined thrills were intensified when tearing down them at each fresh start. Fortunately these hill roads are not entirely uphill in one direction, and downhill in the other, being usually switch-back in character and thus acting both as a drag and an easy at intervals.

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CHAPTER VI

FLEDGED

Towards the latter end of September I was ordered, much to my glee and surprise, to Murree, to assist Lathbury in a survey for the Murree Water Works supply; and was instructed to furnish myself with tentage, as most of our time would be spent in camp. I was soon ready for this fresh venture, and a few days later joined Lathbury in the Northumberland Fusiliers' camp at Ghora Dhaka, a *gali* some 12 miles out of Murree. The idea of the project was to tap certain powerful perennial springs issuing from Muchapuri, a high mountain overlooking Doonga Gali, some 3 or 4 miles beyond Ghora Dhaka; and to convey the water by gravitation and immense syphons into Murree, and other summer military camps en route.

We had to lay out with pegs, therefore, a suitable pipeline on the ground, hugging the sides of the *khuds* at an arranged gradient where feasible, and plunging down great valleys and up the other slopes where syphons became imperative. My nerves were not at the highest pitch of perfection at first, just after the hot weather spent at Peshawur; and I confess that, on commencing work with the Dumpy Level along some of the *khud* sides that had to be negotiated, I was in a state of beastly funk, and oozed with perspiration at every pore. Not surprising, perhaps, when a false step meant pretty certain death on rocks immediately below; and one's body then rolling possibly a few thousand feet lower still into the awful void

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beyond. Lathbury seemed to me a confirmed chamois, as he had been on the job some little time when I joined him; and I envied much his *sang-froid* at the plane table following behind me, until I gradually overcame my nervousness, and felt more at home along the face of these pathless precipices. Yet even after this lapse of time his cheery "It's not death I fear, but mutilation," rings in my ears, as I see him clinging like a monstrous fly to a particularly awesome cliff, while uttering this noble sentiment.

Twenty-four years later, whilst on the Divisional Staff at Rawalpindi, I traversed with my general the well-graded roadway along which the pipes then ran between Doonga Gali and Ghora Dhaka; and I then marvelled that I had the nerve to clamber along those *khuds* as a youth, with one eye glued to the eye-piece of the Dumpy Level, and hanging on to the hill-side, metaphorically, by the lid of the other, while directing the hammering in of pegs by coolies on ahead. I could no more have done it at 45 than fly.

By the middle of November most of the camps had been broken up, and the troops either back or en route to the plains. It now became decidedly chilly when working out of the sun at these high altitudes, but various branch lines from the proposed site of the Murree reservoir had yet to be surveyed to deserted camps at Upper and Lower Thobba, and elsewhere in the vicinity. Thus it was the beginning of December before our field work was completed, and ice and snow had already appeared on the road at Changla Gali, a summer Musketry School, near by, when I was ordered to return to Peshawur and resume work there under Colonel Graves. The two and a half months spent on this hill survey had made a new lad of me when, rosy as an apple, and feeling like a giant refreshed, I rejoined my friends in our chummery at Peshawur.

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And what a different Peshawur now from that during the hot weather! Log fires were burning in our bungalows, for the cold at nights, and in the early mornings when hoar-frost was often seen on the cricket ground the other side of our hedge of roses, emphasized the astonishing change that had taken place during my absence. All seemed so fresh and blithe and gay now. Roses, for which Peshawur is noted, were still in bloom in our compound, and along the hedges lining the Mall. Wives and daughters had returned from the hills to join their husbands and fathers, or come out from home for a like purpose; whilst a sense of fun and cheerfulness pervaded the air, what with dances at the Club, gymkhanas and races, hunting the jackal twice weekly, polo tournaments, cricket matches, picnics, and so on.

The 87th were transferred to Meerut soon after my return, and as dear bluff John Connor—later killed in the South African War—the captain of the local cricket team, accompanied his regiment, I was called upon to run it in his place. And very enjoyable the experience proved, as games were got up by me every Thursday, the usual garrison holiday in India; while several foreign matches were played on our ground against Pindi and other Stations. "Biddy" Graves was a regular attendant at such matches, and his great deep-voiced "Suc-cess, Austin!" whenever I went in to bat, reverberates in my ears yet.

The Peshawur Vale Hunt was, naturally, one of the chief attractions of the cold weather to us tyros; for it possessed a fine pack of English hounds that was most carefully nursed during the hot weather by removal to the small hill-station of Cherat, near by. Although this place was barely 4,000 feet above sea level, and not far from the Afridi border about the Kohat Pass, its climate was cool in comparison with the Peshawur plains; so the dogs were kept in good fettle for pursuing "jacks," which were

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usually run to a stand-still when the scent was strong. One day, however, we sighted a wolf, and for thirty-five minutes we laboured in his wake over country abounding with "grid-irons," mud walls and nasty nullahs, without making any impression on the beast. He appeared to be just lolloping along at a steady easy gait, but never drew nearer; and he eventually had dogs, ponies and all done to a turn, so the fruitless chase was abandoned.

Throughout the hot weather the Afridi hills about the Khyber were completely hidden from cantonments, owing to the dense heat haze, though only 10 to 12 miles distant; and at that time the construction of the noted Landi Kotal serai was being carried out by Lieutenant J. W. Pringle, R.E., in accordance with designs prepared by Lieutenant J. R. L. Macdonald, R.E., both of whom paid periodic visits to Peshawur in connection with the work—the one from Landi Kotal, and the other from Simla. The spacious fort was now completed, and occupied as the headquarters of the Khyber Rifles; whilst its maintenance was handed over to the Military Works at Peshawur. Thus Colonel Graves deputed me to visit the place at intervals on inspection duty.

I had from time to time, of course, entered Peshawur City from cantonments; and there one always saw an extraordinary heterogeneous crowd of trans-frontier, and other, natives, including many tough-looking gentry who would have cheerfully stuck a dagger into one, as an act of courtesy, had they stumbled across one just over the border. But here they were under some sort of police control, though the reputation of the city for deeds of violence among its inhabitants was distinctly unsavoury, as proved by the number of executions for murder that took place weekly within the precincts of the civil jail.

Why we in cantonments obtained immunity from the attention of such cut-throats was probably due to a friendly system of blackmail, prevalent along the frontier. I refer

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to the hiring of *chowkidars*, or night-watchmen, usually of villainous mien who, on the payment of a few rupees *per mensem*, perambulated the precincts of one's bungalow throughout the hours of darkness, when not asleep themselves. Our protectors appeared with the bats at dusk, armed *cap-à-pie* with evil dagger and pistol thrust into their broad kammarbands, and sometimes also a tulwar. But their most potent weapon of offence, or defence, was a chronic cough, or perhaps a capacity for clearing the throat in a boisterous manner would more accurately describe the complaint. Neither in the height of summer nor in the depth of winter, did this disorder desert them; and this it was which warned other would-be thieves that one of their own *genre* was obtaining a decent livelihood by guarding the sacred possessions of those whose salt he was now eating, mere pittance though this was. And since there is generally some honour among thieves, the *chowkidar's* presence on our premises kept other cut-throats at a distance. Still, it was painful to notice that the poor man was usually taken with a particularly severe attack of coughing when he was roused from his slumbers by the crunch of our footsteps whilst returning from mess.

In any case it had not yet been my privilege to penetrate the lairs of cut-throats of the Khyber; so it was with pleasurable anticipation that I embarked upon my first trip to Landi Kotal. The Khyber was only open for traffic two days in the week, Tuesdays and Fridays, which were known as "Kafila Days," as then it was that great caravans of camels, and other beasts of burden, proceeding with goods from Central Asia, entered India through the Pass, accompanied by hordes of men, women and children; and a contrary flow of humanity and animals from India took place at the same time, bound for remote regions in Afghanistan and beyond. On "Kafila Days" the heights overlooking the Pass were picqueted with groups of Khyber Rifles, chiefly Afridis, whose presence more or

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less ensured the safe passage of those filing up and down between Jamrud and Landi Kotal, a distance of about 21 miles.

For my journey I chartered an *ekka*, a one-horse vehicle of strange prehistoric design on two high wheels, with hood overhead, and netting for forage beneath its platform, which was raised well from the ground and so capable of traversing rough going if need be. On this deck my servant and I squatted behind, and beside, our driver, with supplies for the trip, while our bedding was secured to the sides of the conveyance ; and in this manner we covered the 10 miles across the plain to Jamrud Fort, at the mouth of the Pass. Here my pony and syce were awaiting me, and the latter took my place in the *ekka* with his and the pony's gear, whilst I mounted my steed and set forth for Landi Kotal in the personal charge of three Afridi sowars of the Khyber Rifles, the *ekka* following in rear. My body-guard bestrode very spirited country-breds, as sure-footed as mules and with hoofs of iron, judging from the manner in which they dashed about the stony track and hill-slopes when clearing a pathway in the crowds we encountered in the Ali Masjid defile.

Before long the Pass opened out considerably, and much of the last half of the journey was up a relatively wide valley rising steadily towards a flat stony plateau, bounded at some distance by the hills; and in the centre of this amphitheatre the Landi Kotal serai was situated. The actual frontier between India and Afghanistan is still a mile or so farther on, however, at Landi Khana, where the plateau terminates, and the road, passing through the hills, descends to the broad open valley of the Kabul River about Kam Dakka.

Here at Landi Kotal we were ensconced within the walls of an imposing fort, some 3,500 feet above the sea; and as I was the sole white man sojourning among the Afridi garrison of Khyber Rifles until the next "Kafila

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Bazaar outside Landi Kotal Serai, 1890.

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Day," I had ample opportunity for studying my surroundings in this outpost of Empire athwart the road to Kabul. The fort, or defensible caravanserai, was oblong in shape, perhaps 150 yards in length, and half as wide—so far as I can remember after a lapse of thirty-eight years since last I entered it. Along the inner base of its high sun-dried brick walls were quarters for the garrison of several hundred men, stores, magazines, and so on, the roofs of which served as banquettes for firing through the loop-holes in the crenellated parapet walls above. Flanking defence of the perimeter was provided from bastions, and two towers with machicoulis galleries over the iron bullet-proof gateways giving entrance to the fort; while in the centre of this was an open parade ground, capable of accommodating a large number of animals in the event of emergencies. Quarters for four or five British officers existed in a block near one end of the fort; and in one of these I settled down.

Often then, and thereafter, having partaken of my solitary evening meal, I would sit on the ramparts of Landi Kotal fort after dark, smoking the pipe of peace while watching the flashes and listening to the reports of rifles, or *jezails*, fired by villagers of one hamlet near the foot of the hills against their enemies occupying an adjacent one; for feuds and internecine conflicts were common amongst these lawless mountaineers, water and women being frequent causes of vendettas between contiguous villages. Thus, it was only after dark that men from each dare venture forth into the open, from the safety of their walled strongholds, to draw the precious liquid from some contentious spring or pool, as their requirement for the succeeding day. A pleasant kind of life, one would imagine, but regarded as all in the day's sport by these lovers of strife and bloodshed.

Hence I had been forbidden to leave the precincts of the fort without an escort of Khyber Rifles, even to visit

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the Ulus wells, barely a couple of miles distant out on the open plain, from which the water was conveyed in pipes to supply the wants of the garrison. As this could at any time be cut off, in the event of a serious rising among the Afridis, part of my job now was to superintend the sinking of a well inside the fort, and immediately facing the officers' quarters. Water had not been reached by the time I severed my connection with the Military Works at Peshawur, early in 1890; and we had then got down to 140 feet, I think it was. When 50 or 60 feet deep only, I do not pretend to have enjoyed descending and ascending by means of a rope ladder dangling down the dark abyss; and I fear I discontinued the perilous pastime as the work progressed still further into the bowels of the earth. And so back to Peshawur, and Christmas Day festivities the following "Kafila Day."

My first Christmas in India as a young man was one of the cheeriest I can recall in the East; for Mr. Christie, the Sessions Judge at Peshawur, and his wife, who lived in a big bungalow immediately opposite ours on the Mall, invited the whole of our chummery, Birdwood, Skey, "Boy" Bland of the gunners, and me to dinner. Major Coates, the very Irish bachelor Civil Surgeon of Peshawur, and brother to Mrs. Christie, was also there, with two other sisters fresh from Ireland, and brimming over with the high spirits common to daughters of Erin hailing from County Cork. The Paddy elements in the gathering, therefore, evoked a continuous round of merriment by their amusing yarns and remarks from the time we sat down to table until our departure across the road about midnight. Our hostess that evening has remained a firm friend of mine since; for after twelve years of wanderings on my part we met again at Clifton, when she was a widow with two small sons, at the end of 1901. The elder was a babe but a few months old at the time of the cheery Christmas dinner of 1889 at Peshawur;

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and recently suffered some prominence owing to the mysterious disappearance of his wife, eventually discovered at a spa.

The late Duke of Clarence, the elder brother of His Majesty King George, visited Peshawur early in the New Year, and was entertained by Mr. Ommanney, the Commissioner; whilst local society were given an opportunity of meeting H.R.H. at a large Garden Party held in the Commissioner's grounds the day before the Heir Apparent journeyed up the Khyber to Landi Kotal. In her usual light-hearted manner Mrs. Christie told the Prince she devoutly prayed no harm might befall him across the frontier; yet should such a calamity occur she would see that his remains received a "rale iligant wake" in Peshawur; whereat H.R.H. appeared tickled at this friendly concern and assurance on part of the lively Irish lady.

Early in February, 1890, Lieutenants Macdonald and Twining, R.E., arrived in Peshawur to carry out a strategic railway survey up the gorge of the Kabul River and stayed with us in our bungalow. Soon after I settled down at Peshawur, the April before, Macdonald and I had played racquets together at the Club, during one of his fleeting visits from Simla, so he was no stranger to me. He required another R.E. to assist in the survey about to be undertaken and, learning that I had done somewhat similar work up in the Murree hills, asked me if I would like to make one of his party. I naturally jumped at the proposal, and he wired to Simla for my services, having previously squared Colonel Graves, who, sportsman that he was, placed no obstacles in the way of surrendering me to Macdonald should Simla agree.

Macdonald and Twining then took the field with two infantry officers, Macdonald's younger brother in the Royal Warwicks, and "Pat" Gloster of the 18th Royal Irish, which had replaced the 87th at Peshawur. But for

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nearly a month I was kept in a state of uncertainty regarding my fate, for not until March 10th did I receive orders to join the survey party, then in the gorge of the Kabul River.

Thus commenced a long and close association with Macdonald (the late Major-General Sir Ronald), which was to carry me with him to yet other parts of the N.W. Frontier of India, and to still less well-known regions of Equatorial Africa. But I, alas, am now the sole survivor of the Kabul River venture. The younger Macdonald was killed in Uganda in 1897, Gloster in the South African War; and "Geoff" Twining died in harness at the War Office when he had attained to one of the proudest positions in the Corps, four years ago. Strangely enough, Macdonald and I both settled down in the Borough of Bournemouth some years back; and during the few following ones we frequently fought old battles again, whilst engaged in friendly contest on the local golf-links. To my great sorrow, however, he was taken seriously ill in the spring of 1926, and after bearing his cross with exemplary patience passed peacefully away towards the end of June, 1927.

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CHAPTER VII

A SUSPECT SURVEY

In the later 'eighties and early 'nineties of the last century, considerable activity prevailed in India concerning its existing defence arrangements, in view of the menace of a Russian invasion across the North-West Frontier, some indications of which seemed disclosed by the Penjdeh affair of 1885. The Russian bogey was then perhaps at its height; and it was thought that the likely lines of advance of Russia's hosts were three in number; by the Khyber Pass, from the direction of Kabul, on Peshawur and Rawalpindi; from Kandahar through Chaman, with Quetta as its immediate objective; and thirdly, by a central route from the direction of Ghazni, via the Peiwar Kotal and Kurram Valley, towards the Indus.

Comparatively little was then known regarding the features of the Tochi Valley and Gomal River routes; but minor incursions were considered possible from the Pamirs through Chitral, Gilgit, and the mountainous country to the north of the Peshawur district. The difficulties of these latter regions were, however, enormous; and no invading force could there operate with much chance of success beyond, perhaps, the hope of creating diversions to draw away columns of defence from the main theatres threatened. Elaborate field fortification schemes had accordingly been prepared for the protection of the important railway-bridge across the Indus at Attock, and the defence of the arsenals and cantonments

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at Rawalpindi and Quetta; as also for that of the railway-bridge spanning the Indus at Sukkur in Sind, then nearing completion.

Nevertheless, a glance at the map of the North-West Frontier of India will show how wide was the front on which an invasion, on a large scale, might have to be met; while the existing railway facilities were totally inadequate to enable the rapid transference of troops from one threatened quarter to another which might develop into the main line of invasion. The course of the Indus was nowhere traversed by a railway between Attock—roughly midway from Rawalpindi to Peshawur—and Sukkur, a distance of over 500 miles of river front. In that stretch there were no railway communications west of the Indus, while bridges of boats and ferries across the great river were only established at rare intervals.

Moreover, the single line of railway connecting Peshawur with Quetta, both termini in 1889, followed a circuitous inland route, far from the Indus, through Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan and so to Sukkur. Here the Indus was crossed by a fine cantilever bridge, opened to traffic in April, 1889; and a line from Ruk, near by, branched off via Sibi and the Harnai on its northerly course of more than 200 miles to the Quetta plateau. This entailed many stiff gradients and a devious route through a treacherous region subject to wash-outs and land-slides.

No one in India was perhaps more alive to the unsatisfactory condition of communications along the North-West Frontier at this time than General Sir James Browne, the Quartermaster-General in India when Sir Frederick Roberts was Commander-in-Chief. Sir James was a distinguished Royal Engineer, and had carried out the construction of the Harnai Railway under great difficulties, but a few years before, as Chief Engineer. He was, too, an officer with an unrivalled experience of the frontier, and possessed an intimate knowledge of the

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language and idiosyncrasies of the wild tribesmen who come under the term "Pathan and Baluch"; for he had spent much of his life in their midst during stirring times, and had often extricated himself by his courage and ready wit from extremely awkward situations.

The existing road from Peshawur up the Khyber Pass to Landi Kotal was clearly incapable of dealing adequately with the heavy up-and-down traffic essential to maintain a large field force operating in Afghanistan against a potentially well-equipped Russian Army advancing from the direction of Kabul. The likely congestion about the Ali Masjid defile might well prove disastrous to British plans on a great emergency arising; whilst the idea of constructing a railway up the Khyber was at that time ruled out, owing to the stiff gradients imposed by the restricted space through which a line would have to climb to the Landi Kotal plateau beyond. The most promising alternative appeared to be an extension of the railway across the Peshawur plain to the mouth of the Kabul River, and thence to follow its right bank, there Independent Territory, through the gorges which terminate shortly before the Jellalabad plain is reached. Some 8 miles below Dakka, Independent Territory on the right bank ceases; and thence onwards the country on both sides of the river is under the sway of the Amir, and therefore not to be entered for survey purposes.

Macdonald had accordingly been instructed to investigate the river route with reference to its suitability for a railway. The survey was to be made along the right bank to a point as near Dakka as the Political Officer, Colonel Warburton, considered safe; and in this task Macdonald was assisted by the four British officers already enumerated, with a subordinate staff of about 100 *khalassies* (chainmen, etc.) and workmen, together with an escort of 200 men of the Khyber Rifles, commanded by four Afridi officers.

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An old Aberdonian, with a brilliant record at the R.M.A., Woolwich, out of which he easily passed first of his batch into the Royal Engineers, Macdonald was still a subaltern of less than eight years' service when selected for the command of this important undertaking. He had, nevertheless, already acquired a considerable knowledge of the frontier, its tribes and their language, during the construction of the Harnai Railway under Sir James Browne; again on the Black Mountain Expedition, a year or two later; and also in connection with the construction of the Landi Kotal defensible *serai*, designed by him for the headquarters of the Khyber Rifles. His reputation thus stood high at Army Headquarters.

Owing to the month's delay in my receiving orders to join the survey party, it had already finished that portion between Peshawur station and the entrance to the Kabul River gorge at Ursak—a distance of 16 miles across the plains, and easy from a railway point of view. The expedition was now camped at Shahid Miana, some 10 miles up the gorge of the river in the Mullagori country, so well across the British border; and as the district to be traversed was under the political control of Colonel Warburton, I applied to him for the escort necessary to conduct me thither. It was then arranged that I should leave Peshawur on March 14th, in company with Colonel Wallace, R.E., the Manager, and Mr. Upcott, the Superintendent of Ways and Works, of the North-Western Railway, both of whom were proceeding that day to Shahid Miana, to see as much of the line as had already been surveyed.

Colonel Warburton had invited me to an early breakfast for the 14th; but on my arrival at his house I found that the two above gentlemen had already fed in the train on their way up from Lahore, and were anxious to be off at once. Consequently I had but time to swallow one cup of tea to sustain me for a ride throughout the heat of the

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day until Shahid Miana was reached at 3.30 p.m. We drove the first 6 miles to Matthra Thana in a ghari, and there mounted horses awaiting us for the 20-mile ride through the hills, escorted by a party of Khyber Rifles. Our baggage followed later on mules, also accompanied by men of that force.

Once across the border, we continued along the bed of a rocky nullah for several miles before striking a steep path leading up the face of a hill, from whose summit we obtained our last view of the Peshawur Valley. Up and down much broken country we rode, until we at length alighted upon a rough caravan track winding its way through Mullagori territory. Several fortified villages were passed, but progress was wretchedly slow; so it was 2.30 before we gained our first glimpse of the gorge of the Kabul River, lying some 2,500 feet below us. From our lofty position the river itself appeared a peculiarly green colour, in strong contrast to the sombre-hued rocks that formed the sides of the precipitous ravine; and seemed like some monstrous serpent writhing and gliding by a sinuous course through the mountains to reach the plains beyond. With much difficulty could we distinguish the survey party's big boat, which was capable of carrying sixty or seventy men and lay moored to the river bank, near the mouth of the Shahid Miana nullah, though our lynx-eyed Afridis kept pointing it out to us as if they viewed it from a distance of a few hundred yards only.

We now commenced the rough stony descent, which occupied us more than an hour, for the track had necessarily to follow a tortuous trail; and a sigh of relief escaped me when we at last gained the bed of the Shahid Miana nullah, about a mile above the camp, as my hunger was then almost painful. We found the camp pitched in a narrow enclosed spot, full of rocks and boulders hedged in by steep banks, nigh on a mile from the river.

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We now learned that warlike rumours were in the air. The Mohmands occupying the left bank of the river, territory of the Amir, had apparently begun to view the possibility of a railway some day penetrating their fastnesses with grave suspicion, as likely to threaten their independence. Hence, one Mullah Khalil, a holy individual by repute, had recently despatched a letter to Macdonald in which, after the usual amicable greetings, he waxed vituperative. In short, he demanded to be informed if it was thought that he was dead, that a survey for a railway should thus be made past "his territory," as he termed it, without his sanction. Ten to twelve years earlier, this turbulent priest had been somewhat of a thorn in the flesh, during the Afghan War of 1878–80; and he now vowed that under no circumstances would he permit the survey to be carried out; his banner was being joined by 4,000 adherents, who were prepared to die in opposing any advance up the river.

That was a promising piece of intelligence, our escort numbering one-twentieth of his vaunted hosts; but there flowed an unfordable, albeit narrow, river between us; and the only large boat in these waters accompanied the survey party. The usual crossing of the river was accomplished by travellers employing *mussaks*, or inflated skins. The goat or sheep skin blown out, the *voyageur* stripped, passed his legs through thongs attached to the *mussak*, and lay on the inflated mass as he pushed off from the shore. With his body thus raised above the surface, he worked his legs as though swimming, and paddled with his hands at the same time; while his gun, ammunition, sword, dagger and other weapons were done up into a bundle with his garments, and the whole secured to the top of his head by his *pagri*. In this manner alone could Mullah Khalil and his braves cross the river to attack our small force; so his threat was disregarded, and the good work continued, though the old war-horse's letter was

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favoured by the soft answer that occasionally turneth away wrath.

Colonel Wallace and Mr. Upcott could only spend the one night at Shahid Miana, and returned next day to Peshawur by river in order to see as much of the gorge as possible. The difficult nature of the terrain to be surveyed from a railway point of view through the gorge of the river naturally made progress somewhat slow; and whereas the alignment over the 16 miles across the plains was accomplished in as many days, the remaining 31 miles from Ursak to Samsai, the end of Independent Territory, occupied the expedition from February 22nd until May 4th before the field work was entirely completed, and the line demarcated along the hill-sides throughout. Fifteen short tunnels were found to be unavoidable, owing to sharp bends and precipitous cliffs in certain reaches; while a good deal of cross drainage had to be provided for, particularly at the restricted mouths of several important valleys, such as the Kam Shilman and Loi Shilman. Behind the close-set walls of rock that confine their entrances to the river, these open out gradually inland and expand into comparatively wide cultivated basins.

The Kabul was now about at its lowest level in the year; but as some of its tributaries have their source in the Hindu Khush range, a considerable rise takes place during the summer months, the result of melting snows; and numerous indications showed that exceptionally high floods, due to a combination of heavy rains and snow water, had banked up the stream at acute bends in narrow reaches as much as 45 feet, on occasion, above winter level. Thus the proposed alignment for the railway had to be carried well up along the hill-slopes to provide a good margin of safety. In spite of this, however, it was found practicable to obtain a steady easy gradient of 1 in 200 up the gorge as far as Samsai.

Nevertheless, the nature of the terrain prevented our

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camps being moved along the river bank itself; and mule roads had to be constructed inland to intended camping grounds on ahead. In order to facilitate going to and from our work in the gorge, however, rough footpaths were made along the bank where possible; and where baffled by precipices these would be carried several hundred feet up the hill-sides, to circumvent the obstacle, and then descend to practicable ground again beside the stream. *Mussak* rafts were frequently employed by us also for proceeding down the river to complete back work, and to return to camp when the survey had reached some miles up-stream of it. As the river now abounded with rapids, and occasional whirlpools lurked at the base of certain lofty indented cliffs, such trips were not lacking in excitement; and I was early initiated into the thrills of these *mussak* raft voyages.

When our survey had advanced some 3 miles up-stream of Shahid Miana, we had skins blown out at the close of the day's work, and a small raft put together with baulks of wood. Squatting on the skins, we officers took aboard several of the Khyber Rifles as escort; and the two men in charge of the craft pushed out from the bank at a spot where the river made a sharp right-angled bend. Almost at once we were swirled round the base of great cliffs on the opposite bank, and then shot into some rapids whose billows were not less than 3 feet in height. The buoyant raft bobbed up and down like a cork over each swell, whilst travelling at great speed. The sensation was sublime, but some of our escort, making a trip for the first time, clutched feverishly on to the baulks of our flimsy craft; while they appeared surprised when, in answer to their anxious inquiries, we said we did not fear an upset, since we could all swim.

A short stretch of smooth flowing water followed, and then we were whisked into the Fasl whirlpool at the base of a huge cliff on our side of the river, and after making a

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semi-circuit of it were rudely expelled into a series of rapids, down which we careered with ever-increasing celerity to the sandy shore at the mouth of the Shahid Miana nullah. The Khyberis seemed relieved to arrive safely, but the walk back from our work with the *khalassies* would have taken them nearly an hour; whereas the river trip occupied little more than one-third that time. And this was but the forerunner of many such lively voyages during the remainder of the survey.

Though the men of the Khyber Rifles had perhaps good reason to be nervous on the water, fully accoutred as they were with rifle, ammunition and belts, their work on land was beyond praise. Born and bred among the wild Afridi hills, they were thoroughly at home in these rugged gorges; and those accompanying us on the day's outing intuitively split up into twos and threes as we approached the scene of our labours, and crowned the heights on our bank, whence they could obtain a good view of us and the opposite hill-sides. About half the Rifles usually came out with us, while the remainder attended to the safety of the camp, provided escorts for convoys between Jamrud and ourselves, and furnished guards and picquets by night on hills close at hand that overlooked the camp. Their duties were certainly onerous, but never once did they complain; on the contrary, the prospects of a scrap with the Mullah's following appealed forcibly to their warlike instincts, and kept them in perpetual good humour.

Owing to the probability of being fired into by evilly disposed Mohmands on the left bank, our camps were generally in sheltered positions well removed from rifle range of that bank. Moreover, whilst at work in, or opposite, the territories of the Mullagori, Tarakzai, and Halimzai tribes, some of their representative *maliks* dwelt in our camp as sureties for our safety within their borders. They and their followers frequently numbered sixty or

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seventy men, all of whom received a small payment daily, as well as free rations. Some additional men were also raised as levies from the local tribes to assist the Khyber Rifles; so, including the Shinwaris who supplied about 150 mules as our requirements in transport, our full camp numbers often swelled to something like 500 souls.

On March 25th our camp at Shahid Miana was struck for removal to Gutta Gudar, some 8 miles up-stream; but a detour of 22 miles was involved for our baggage animals, and one night was spent by us, therefore, in the Kam Shilman Valley en route. Its mouth enters the Kabul River about a mile above the Tor Kamar precipice, an immense rocky bluff rising 300 feet sheer out of the stream, and with a large whirlpool at its base. Over its summit a footpath had been constructed by our coolies, so we had no difficulty in gaining the entrance to the Kam (or, small) Shilman, there only 70 or 80 yards wide, with steep rocky sides. After proceeding a short distance up from the river, the perpendicular cliffs closed in still more; while in the bed of the nullah step-like drops of 10 to 12 feet occurred, down which fine cascades must often plunge after heavy rains. Gradually the cliffs opened out again, and tracts of high reeds with occasional thickets, through which small clear streams were trickling, appeared in place of the lower bed of rock. Indeed, one could almost imagine oneself now in the haunts of the Bengal tiger, so striking was the change from the barren gorge of the Kabul. And as we continued still farther up the valley the rocky cliffs ceased, the country on either bank assuming a more rolling character; while, 3 miles from the river, we were well into this fertile valley, with half-ripe corn standing on its terraced plots of land. Another mile farther up brought us to our camp for the night, pitched on gently sloping ground on the right bank of the nullah bed, out of which a small spring gushed forth to supply us with ample water for our needs.

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Our surroundings were a truly refreshing contrast to Shahid Miana, and the sparsely-clad hillsides and cliffs of which we had seen so much. From the top of an eminence close to camp, we obtained a splendid view up the Kam Shilman Valley, with its scattered groves of trees. Near by were two villages perched on low knolls on either side of the nullah; one deserted and in a ruined condition, the other full of life and obviously flourishing. Some time before the inhabitants of the two villages had decided there was not sufficient arable land available for both. The matter was settled in the old sweet way by a resort to arms; and so hurriedly were the men of the vanquished village forced to flee that they left their most priceless possessions, their womenkind, in the hands of the victors.

All the villages seen by us across the Peshawur border were surrounded by high mud walls, roughly loopholed and provided at one or more of their corners with tall towers, in which watchmen take up their posts. The tops of the towers are loopholed, too, thus enabling the sheltered defenders to fire freely on those attacking, or besieging, the village. But within its stout walls the huts of the different families are erected seemingly without system, for tortuous alleys alone supply means of communication from one point to another inside the oblong enclosure.

We had to rest content with this brief glimpse of the Kam Shilman valley, for while we resumed our work along the river bank next day the camp was moved by a circuitous inland route to Gutta Gudar, a distance of 14 miles; and to that spot we tramped for several miles along the rough path beside the river towards nightfall. It was with some heart-sinking that we beheld the new camp from afar, perched on a plateau 700 or 800 feet above the river; because, tired as we always were when bound for home after a full day's toil, we little relished the prospect of this stiff ascent at the end of our weary crawl along the

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cliffs. Happily we found that our estimable Said Shah had previously constructed a skilful zigzag path from the river to the plateau, and had thoughtfully sent our ponies down to meet us at its foot; so we cheerfully mounted our steeds and were thus conveyed in comfort to the camp.

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CHAPTER VIII

IN THE KABUL RIVER GORGE

Our arrival at Gutta Gudar was greeted by another letter from Mullah Khalil, received by Macdonald whilst we were at dinner. It contained the customary bombastic figures of speech in which the Oriental so much delights; but this time the vials of his wrath were poured chiefly upon the Government, whom he blamed in no measured terms for having despatched us on such a fool's errand. The priest seemed more sorry for, than angry with, us personally, though assuring us that persistence with the survey would inevitably involve our destruction. Again he was favoured with a conciliatory reply, informing him that the survey had the sanction of the Amir, and would certainly be carried out.

The next night a beautiful clear moon illuminated the hill-tops around us when we retired to rest; but in the small hours we were rudely aroused from our slumbers by the "ping" of bullets passing over our tents, followed by the crack of rifles. Our alert sentries immediately returned the fire from all sides of the camp; and it seemed for a minute or two as if a general engagement were about to commence. The whole affair quickly subsided, however, for, finding that we were not to be taken unawares, the *budmashes* decamped when subjected to fire themselves.

The point from which we had been sniped was a knoll 700 or 800 yards inland, whence a good view of our tents, bathed in the bright moonlight, could be

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obtained, as the camp lay some 200 feet below. Fortunately no damage was done by the bullets, which passed harmlessly over our tents, and landed in the mule lines without touching a single animal. Further adjacent knolls were occupied by picquets, however, during the remainder of our stay in this camp to prevent a repetition of the annoying performance.

Meanwhile work by day steadily progressed up the river towards the Mullah's "territory" on the left bank. Parties of Durma Khel Halimzais from that side of the river then opened fire on our road-making gangs, employed some distance ahead of the survey. The Mullah's myrmidons held a position about 600 yards away, and well up the heights on their side, whence they easily commanded the road-makers. The fire was returned by a Khyber Rifle picquet near at hand; and when this was reinforced by officers from the survey area, and additional troops from camp, the tribesmen came under such well-directed volleys that they retired farther up the gorge.

Desultory firing continued daily for the next ten days, whilst work in the gorge proceeded. Reinforcements from Landi Kotal now brought the strength of the Khyber Rifles up to 250 men; but the nearer we drew to the Mullah's headquarters, the fewer became the numbers reported by our spies as comprising his *lashkar* (army). In place of the 4,000 fighting men he had boasted he would bring into the field to oppose our advance, our spies stated he could barely collect 400. And these were no match in marksmanship for our Khyber Rifles, several of the enemy being killed and wounded at long ranges, whereas not a single member of the survey party was hit by their fire. As soon as trouble broke out, however, we British officers took the precaution of adopting the Khyber Rifle head-dress, and carried Martini carbines in order to be less conspicuous.

All this while Mullah Khalil had remained at the vil-

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lage of Chamcha himself; and as the survey approached that point we learned that he had there been joined by the retiring Mohmands. At length, ensconced on the heights of Chamcha peak, these braves collected to dispute our further advance. This dominating position, a huge rocky cliff rising 500 or 600 feet sheer out of the river on the left bank, was well adapted for denying passage along the opposite slope; and since the orders of Government forbade the survey party crossing the river into Amir's territory, it looked as though a slogging match athwart the narrow stream could alone decide the issue.

The situation was now aggravated by the action of the Tarakzai *maliks* who were in camp as sureties for our safety within the limits of their territory. Camp had been moved from Gutta Gudar to Shinaili, some 3 miles farther up the river, on April 6th; and six days later tents were again being struck to march still further forward to Narai, just beyond their border, when these *maliks* came up to Macdonald in a body and refused to accompany us thither. Things began to look rather black; for we had secretly heard that, as soon as the Tarakzai had seen us out of their domain, they had promised the Mullah to come over to him and oppose our further progress. And yet, from dictates of policy, we had for weeks been compelled to entertain these treacherous tribesmen in a friendly manner, because they would assuredly have gone over at once, had they been dismissed earlier. The rising would probably have then assumed such serious proportions that the survey party might have been immediately recalled to India.

Matters remained at a deadlock for a time. It was important to get the survey completed within the next few weeks as we were well into April now, and the heat at midday was already trying. A month hence, work all day long in the gorge of the river would be almost out of

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the question, owing to the high temperature usual at that time of the year. Happily, all the Tarakzai *maliks* were not tarred with the same brush of treachery as those who had made the morning threat. Two of them, Jang and Ajoon, were absent when the others declined to accompany us farther; and these two men had throughout displayed a most friendly attitude towards the survey officers. It seemed therefore that, ashamed of the treason of their brother *maliks*, they preferred to make their statement later, and separately.

They appeared in the early afternoon, accompanied by one Kamran, an estimable Kam Shilman *malik*. The three reported that they had been over to interview Mullah Khalil, and strongly advised him to desist from causing further trouble. The *mullah*, convinced that the survey mission was ready to fight its way if necessary, had consented to come to terms with us. The *maliks* accordingly returned with all speed, bearing certain conditions to our chief, and as these seemed reasonable Macdonald agreed to them with slight modifications; for, being debarred from crossing the river, survey work under the existing circumstances was not altogether an unqualified pleasure.

The three *maliks* sought the *mullah* out again the same evening and informed him that the arrangements he suggested had been approved, with the reservations mentioned. Seeing the turn that affairs had now taken, the other Tarakzai *maliks* in camp looked decidedly sheepish and made no effort to conceal their chagrin; while they, doubtless, vowed that Jang and Ajoon should pay dearly for their action when we had left the country.

Next day our three emissaries returned from their visit to Mullah Khalil, saying that all our proposals had been accepted by him, and that he guaranteed our safe movements within Khwaizai and Baizai Mohmand limits. As an earnest of good faith all his picquets had been with-

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drawn from the *sangars* on the commanding heights previously occupied by them; and thereafter he provided tribal levies to crown the heights on the left bank, so our work in the gorge below met with no further hindrance at his hands.

As we felt by no means certain, however, that Mullah Khalil might not yet play us false, and because the heat, too, was now becoming great, our working hours were again increased, in order to push the survey through the dangerous Shinaili gorge with all speed. We dressed by candle-light at 5 a.m., as we supposed—on return to civilization it proved to be 4—and were off to work before sunrise. Since we never returned to camp until 6.30 or 7 p.m., every day's toil in the sun was long and fatiguing throughout the remainder of the survey.

One night, whilst bivouacked on our work, it came on to rain in the small hours, and as Twining was sleeping next to me on the bare hard ground, I ventured to rouse him, that he might draw his waterproof sheet over his bedding. In an instant he seized my wrist with the grip of a vice, and looking at me in a dazed manner, began to feel for his revolver under his pillow with the other hand. This was not exactly the gratitude I pictured, and having no desire to be shot by my friend in the darkness for performing an act of imagined charity, I warmly protested that it was "only me." He then slowly relaxed his hold, and got out his sheet when conscious of my solicitude on his behalf. But the incident served to show how recent events had created an atmosphere of suspicion and alertness among us; and I did not wake him again during the night.

Thus we continued working steadily up the gorge with few breaks in our daily toil, except for an occasional heavy downpour of rain: most unusual at this time of the year, but much appreciated by us as lowering the temperature considerably for a day or two. One such storm broke

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over us at dawn in our camp at Ugde Khwar, some 3 miles up-stream of Narai, whence we moved on April 23rd. Our camp was pitched on the bank of a dry nullah bed, about half a mile up a small valley leading into the Kabul; and above the pattering of the heavy rain on our tents, our ears were presently assailed by the sound of a distinct roar. Popping my head out of my tent to ascertain its cause, I beheld a wall of water about 2 feet in height rushing down the nullah bed. Five minutes later a tremendous torrent, 10 feet deep and 20 yards across, was flowing with immense velocity past our tents, and lashing itself into a fury of milky foam against a large rock obstructing the fairway. In resisting the shock the hard-pressed boulder emitted reports at intervals like the distant crack of rifles. The hills around, too, had suddenly become alive with white serpentine streaks which, coursing and tearing down their steep stony slopes, mingled with others to form splendid cascades and feathery waterfalls that plunged headlong into the angry torrent. The spectacle was a moving one; but an hour later the avalanche of water had abated greatly, and soon after midday the nullah bed was dry, save for a few pools.

Gradually the sides of the river gorge grew less formidable, and the pace at which our work could progress along them improved. Thus, on April 28th, once again was our camp shifted 5 or 6 miles farther up the river to Katskai, our last camp on the survey proper, and situated in a kind of basin surrounded by high hills, except towards the widened river, some 600 yards distant. During that day our work reached Shinpokh village, the first actually overlooking the Kabul on its right bank.

It was a pleasing change in the gorge to find a large block of habitations, on the side of a gently sloping plot of ground withdrawn about half a mile from the river, the intervening space to which was wholly under cultivation. In addition to the main village, groups of four or five huts

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On the Kabul River at Gutta Gudar.

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within mud wall enclosures, and provided with small towers, were dotted about. Wells furnished with Persian wheels for irrigating purposes were creaking and groaning about us, as patient bullocks wearily turned them; while mulberry trees still further enhanced the fresh green appearance of this little oasis, from which, doubtless, the village derived its name, since the prefix "shin" is the Pushtu for "green."

Mullah Khalil's village Palosai was on the far bank, and nearly opposite Shinpokh, at a point where the river makes a wide sweep; but as the hills recede considerably on that side it was well removed from the water's edge. Whilst at work thereabouts, one of the Loi Shilman *maliks*, Jumal by name, who was out with us that day, gravely remarked to Macdonald, "Sahib, you have but to say the word, and I will cross the river and slay Mullah Khalil in his house. You will only have all this trouble over again, when you return to these parts to build the railway, if he remains alive."

The *malik* appeared quite unable to understand Macdonald's prompt repudiation of such a treacherous proposal, since he was regarded by his fellow-tribesmen as a particularly trustworthy honourable man. In place of this insidious suggestion, Jang and Ajoon paid the priest a friendly visit a day or two later, and returned in the evening with a present from the "Holy One" in the shape of a fine fat-tailed sheep. At the same time the *mullah* sent a message regretting that his great age prevented him from appearing before us in person—an honour we should have much appreciated as the old war-horse had never before paid his respects to an Englishman.

With the end of our labours so near at hand, and the heat daily becoming more trying, all set to work with increased good-will, and soon the survey had reached our camp at Katskai; while a day or two later it arrived at the

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limit of Independent Territory at Samsai, a couple of miles up-stream of camp. The valley of the Kabul here began to open out markedly, and though the river still remained unfordable it now flowed through three or more channels. A few huts and coarse vegetation, consisting of thickets and some small trees, with a huge wide-spreading one close to the water's brink, and a large ruined mud fort, built by one Ursula Khan, furnished the scene of the end of the survey near a *ziarat*, or graveyard.

May 4th was a red-letter day. The *khalassies* came in a body to congratulate Macdonald on the successful termination of his task as we sat on the ruins of Ursula Khan's stronghold; and beneath the great spreading tree all out on work were presently photographed by Twining. A *mussak* raft floating on the water, and loaded with Khyber Rifles, formed the foreground; whilst we stood behind with the remaining sepoys, *khalassies*, and the few *maliks* in the field with us. The last survey pillar of Portland cement and stone had the following inscription cut into the still wet mortar on its flat top by me:

KABUL RIVER SURVEY, 1890

J. R. L. Macdonald, R.E. W. Gloster, 18th R.I. P. G. Twining, R.E. H. H. Austin, R.E. N. A. Macdonald, 6th R. Warwicks. Said Shah. Subadar Swale. Subadar Md. Gali. Jemadar Timar. Jemadar Amir.

We all made merry that evening at dinner, but were up at 3 a.m. next morning. The camp had been struck and the mules loaded up before daylight, and we were all bound for Mt. Tor Sappar and Peshawur, via the Loi Shilman Valley, at dawn. Moving across country, we obtained from the high hills behind Katskai a magnificent view up the river towards Jellalabad, and the snowy ranges of the Safed Kuh beyond, ere we descended into the bed of the Loi (or great) Shilman. This we followed up for several miles to reach our intended camping-

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ground for the night, beside a village where the valley opened out to a wide extent. As the baggage was far behind, *malik* Jumal, the would-be assassin of Mullah Khalil, ordered charpoys to be brought out for us and had them placed under shady trees. Here we rested during the heat of the day, Mt. Tor Sappar, our next day's goal, being clearly discernible above the intervening hills; while the villagers supplied us with light refreshments in the shape of eggs, buttermilk and Pathan bread, all of which were most welcome, for we now felt ravenous.

Not until 3 p.m. did our mules arrive, and camp was then pitched on a large area of cultivation recently cut. While seated outside the mess-tent, at peace with all mankind, after dark, one of Gloster's watch-dogs, a great white, shaggy creature from the Boner country, and extremely savage at night, began to bark, snarl and strain furiously at the chain attaching him to his master's tent-pole. Macdonald hurled a big clod in its direction to quieten the beast, whereupon a dull thud, followed by a deep groan, fell upon our ears. Dashing forward to see what luckless wight "Bones" was devouring, we were surprised to find our sweeper writhing on the ground, clutching at his breast and feebly murmuring, "Ham margaya, sahib, ham margaya" (I'm dead, sir, I'm dead).

He, brave fellow, had rushed forward to rescue Bones's supposed victim, only to receive Macdonald's missile full in the chest, and to drop in his tracks. The man was, in truth, far more frightened than hurt by this unseen blow from out of the darkness; but the rough humour of the situation did not penetrate the humble menial's mind for quite a long time. Some pecuniary recompense might probably have quickened his wits, and it was possibly the hope of it being forthcoming that prolonged his lamentations.

We were off at dawn and continued up the Loi Shilman

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to the foot of Mt. Tor Sappar, where we commenced its ascent by a zigzag track that had been made from a beautiful spring and pool at its base to the summit, when the mountain was used as a sanatorium during the Afghan War. Once on the top, we were nearly 6,000 feet above sea level, and pleasant and cool it proved amid our wooded surroundings, after the vale of the Kabul. The view was superb, away to the snow-covered hills of Afghanistan, with the Jellalabad plains in the middle distance, and the Kabul River meandering across them before entering the gorges we had lately traversed, and which lay deep beneath us.

General Sir James Browne and Colonel Warburton had reached the Landi Kotal *serai* that morning; and as they were to join us on Mt. Tor Sappar, Macdonald rode forward to meet them en route.

I was naturally much interested in meeting the Quarter-master-General, of whom one had heard so many stories; and who in appearance was the absolute antithesis of his small, spare and swarthy companion, the "Lord of the Khyber." Sir James was unusually sturdy of build, and obviously still possessed of the great physical strength that had made him so doughty an opponent in the combats of his youth; whilst the glow of health radiated from his cheery countenance and bright smiling eyes. Very entertaining was his conversation, too, at dinner the two nights we were all camped together on the summit of this isolated mountain, for he recounted many amusing frontier episodes of his younger days. Colonel Warburton was likewise an admirable *raconteur*, whose experiences were of intense interest to us youngsters; so the two days spent with these notables on lone Tor Sappar dwell in the memory.

Next morning the results of the field work just accomplished were gone into by our guests with Macdonald; and in the afternoon a largely attended durbar was held,

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at which the various *maliks* who had rendered good service during the survey were suitably rewarded.

At its close Colonel Warburton conducted us to the top of a precipice, nearly 2,000 feet high, facing the Khyber; and there we might all have been seen launching huge rocks and boulders, with schoolboy enthusiasm, down the giddy abyss. The venomous manner in which these rolled and leapt down the face of this magnificent cliff, with ever-increasing momentum, was an awe-inspiring sight. If not broken to fragments before the bottom was reached, they either disappeared like thunderbolts into the bed of a deep nullah far below, or were pulled up short by some luckless tree with a terrific crash. The pastime certainly caused one to appreciate how unpleasant must be the feelings of troops, while encountering this form of defence by tribesmen occupying heights being assailed.

Sir James Browne and Macdonald marched next day with an escort of 100 Khyber Rifles to the Kabul River at Gutta Gudar, where they embarked on *mussak* rafts the following morning. Thus as they floated down to Michni, and travelled by road thence to Peshawur, the Quartermaster-General was able to see for himself many difficult reaches of the gorge from a railway point of view.

Colonel Warburton and the rest of us marched the 8 miles to the Landi Kotal *serai*, where we spent the night. Outside was assembled that evening a large "kafila" from Kabul; and among the heterogeneous crowd of traders and travellers from all parts of Central Asia were twenty Khokandis, quite different in appearance from those about them. Their faces were of a dull-brick colour, and their features Mongolian; whilst their dress consisted of rough skins and blanket coats, and trousers tucked into high-top Russian boots. They seemed only to speak a Persian patois, and the money they carried for their

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distant pilgrimage to Mecca were gold coins, bearing the stamp of Russian eagles.

The whole multitude moved off down the Khyber next morning, as did we, to traverse the 22 miles to Jamrud at the lower end of the pass, though we pushed on the remaining 10 miles into Peshawur Cantonment. Four and a half months later, I ran across a party of these selfsame Khokandis, who had only then arrived at the Lahore stage of their long journey. They recognized me almost as soon as I them, and at once gathered round me; so I helped to put them into the right train for Karachi. They appeared utterly lost in the turmoil of the station, and one can but wonder if they ever succeeded in reaching the tomb of the Prophet. Their enthusiasm must, indeed, have been great to embark on so hazardous an undertaking, so ill-equipped they seemed for the venture that lay before them.

Our former chummery at Peshawur had been broken up during my absence, Birdwood and Skey being both transferred elsewhere; so the bungalow stood silent and forlorn, with the belongings of Macdonald, Twining and myself alone stored in it. We accordingly once more took up our quarters there, for much yet remained to be done in paying off the *khalassies*, rewarding a number of additional *maliks*, and winding up affairs generally.

It has already been shown that the withdrawal of Mullah Khalil's opposition to the survey was in no small measure due to the friendly part played by the three *maliks*, Kamran, Jang and Ajoon. Now Ajoon was, unfortunately, an outlaw from British territory, suspected of having committed a murder in Peshawur City some years before; though he had always protested to us his complete innocence of the crime that had banned him from British soil. Quite young, perhaps six and twenty, Ajoon was one of the handsomest and most pleasant-mannered trans-frontier men I have ever met. Of

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sturdy build, with short brown beard and whiskers, and cheery smile displaying a perfect set of teeth, one could not but be attracted by him. He always carried a Snider carbine, and many a time envied us the possession of our more handy and accurate Martini ones. Indeed, he would frequently say that he was willing to pay 250 rupees, if we would sell him "just one."

It was difficult to believe that the bearer of so open and frank a face, and charming manner, could have been concerned in any cold-blooded murder; and Ajoon's one desire was to be permitted to accompany us to India, and be granted facilities for establishing his innocence under our safe conduct. The good work he had done during the negotiations with Mullah Khalil thus influenced Macdonald in retaining his services throughout the subsequent survey, and bringing him with us to Peshawur.

The Civil authorities were duly informed by Macdonald of the fact; but Ajoon was cautioned at the same time never to leave the precincts of our bungalow compound pending the disposal of his case. Meanwhile he was rewarded with 120 rupees in cash, and an expensive *lungi* (headdress) for the admirable service he had rendered the survey. For some reason, however, Macdonald did not feel quite easy in his mind with regard to the view the Deputy-Commissioner might take of Ajoon's presence with us; and having a presentiment of coming trouble he directed Twining, early one morning, to convey Ajoon in a tonga to Jamrud, and deposit him safely across the border.

Less than two hours after their departure from the bungalow, the head of the police arrived with a guard, and armed with a warrant for Ajoon's arrest! As the bird had flown, this unworthy intention was frustrated; but, needless to say, a distinct coolness arose between us and the author of this discreditable move—well calcu-

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lated to "blacken our faces" in the eyes of all the *maliks* whom we had brought to Peshawur.

The subsequent fate of Ajoon affected us deeply. He was foully done to death in an ambuscade prepared for him by the two Tarakzai *maliks* who had been the spokesmen at Shinaili, when they and their brethren refused to accompany us to Narai. Jang, who had assisted him in the negotiations with Mullah Khalil, was forced to flee from his home with his wife and family. He sought shelter in Peshawur City, as Lall Mahommed and Mahommed Amir, the two blackguards in question, were out for his blood also.

When we heard of Ajoon's cowardly murder we could not help wondering whether he might not have laid low his two treacherous assailants had it been permissible to present him with "just one" Martini carbine, with which to defend himself in the gorge of the Kabul River.

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CHAPTER IX

'TWIXT KABUL RIVER AND ZHOB

Throughout the strenuous days of survey in the field it had always been understood that we should work at the report, plans and estimate for the Kabul River Railway, in the salubrious clime of Simla; and we had gone so far as to engage a bungalow there for that purpose. It was a great disappointment on reaching Tor Sappar, therefore, to learn, from the Director-General of Railways in India, that this work must be carried out at Lahore—a poisonous place in the hot weather for sustained mental effort, such as lay before us. Nothing remained to be done, however, but to cancel the lease of the Simla bungalow and to proceed to Lahore, when everything had been wound up at Peshawur.

From the middle of May until the end of June, Macdonald, Twining and I toiled under trying conditions of intense heat at Lahore; but at length obtained permission to move our entire office to Mt. Tor Sappar, where Colonel Warburton was spending the hot weather under canvas, protected by a contingent of his much-loved Khyber Rifles, together with Colonel Aslam Khan, their Commandant. On this mountain top we accordingly pitched our camp; and thanks to the relative coolness of our surroundings were able to work continuously from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour off for breakfast and lunch; whilst walks about the hill-sides in the cool of the evening constituted our only form of exercise.

We had our meals with Colonels Warburton and Aslam

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Khan, and never had we fed so well and cheaply as in this little mess run by the latter; for he supplied us with luscious grapes, and other fruits, from his gardens in Peshawur, and even provided bottled beer for our dinners! Mutton, fowls and eggs, obtained from the villagers in the Khyber, furnished the groundwork of our three chief meals; but including everything our mess bills rarely exceeded 30 rupees, or £2, say, p.m. We had our own little band, too, for every evening at dusk the few Khyber Rifle musicians comprising it would play us a selection of their national airs, such as the "Zakhmi Dil" (wounded heart), on their *saranais*, reed flute-like instruments, and drums; while they marched up and down a comparatively level plot near the mess-tent. It was weird and wild music, often mournful, but well in keeping with our surroundings and semi-civilized bodyguard.

Colonel Aslam Khan was a perfectly charming person. A powerful broad-shouldered man, with beard and whiskers becoming tinged with grey, his handsome, almost ruddy, face and regular features betokened the aristocrat he was, through his cousinship with Abdur Rahman, the absolute ruler of Afghanistan. He seldom attempted to speak English to us, though he understood it much better than he would admit; while nearly every evening after dinner the "Sirdar Sahib" would be called upon by us for a story. This he would relate after the manner of the Arabian Nights, for it was usually continued night after night by him with unfailing good humour, since he never seemed to lack ideas, and created strange new situations to retain our interest throughout. Every word that fell from his lips was in such pure and simple Urdu—a foreign tongue to him also—that even I could follow the story almost as if he were telling it in English.

Some six years later this attractive polished gentleman visited England, and I saw him one summer's evening at the old Welcome Club in the Earl's Court Exhibition of

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those days. He was then Colonel Sir Aslam Khan, K.C.I.E., and one of the lions of the London season, which he well deserved to be in acknowledgment of his wonderful work with, and control over, the Khyber Rifles, the Guardians of the Khyber. It was a far cry from lone Tor Sappar to the Welcome Club, and the novelty of his surroundings must surely have stirred him greatly; while my thoughts certainly carried me back to the pleasant weeks spent with him and Colonel Warburton on that shaley mountain top overlooking the Khyber.

By the middle of August our work had so nearly reached completion that we returned to Lahore; and putting the final touches there to the project were able to disperse on a month's leave, prior to re-assembling again at Quetta for the Zhob Valley Railway Survey, for which we had been ordered to hold ourselves in readiness. The report, estimate, etc., of the Kabul River Railway were submitted to the Government of India through the usual channels; and in due course Macdonald and his staff received its special commendation for the work accomplished.

A considerable number of years elapsed, however, before any further steps were taken to carry out the construction of this railway. A start was eventually made in 1905, when Lord Kitchener was Commander-in-Chief in India, on the line surveyed by Macdonald. Lord Kitchener at first formed the opinion that a somewhat shorter route, and one less exposed to hostile sharpshooters on the left bank of the river, might be obtained by leaving the Kabul River where the Loi Shilman entered the right bank. He desired the line to follow that valley to near its head, and then to descend again into the Kabul River in the neighbourhood of Samsai. This possible alternative route had already been considered by Macdonald in 1890; but he had found that it would involve gradients of about 1 in 50; that work for the most part

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would be as heavy as in the route he recommended; and that there would be at least one long costly tunnel necessary, in order to get down again to the level of the Kabul River alignment about Samsai. Macdonald actually accompanied Lord Kitchener in an examination of the Loi Shilman alternative in 1903, and then convinced the Commander-in-Chief, somewhat against Lord Kitchener's will, of the advantage to be gained by adhering to the river route throughout.

Nevertheless, all work on the Kabul River alignment was abandoned for financial reasons in 1908, when the railway had already been carried several miles up the gorge of the river. Nothing more was done to extend the railway from Peshawur, beyond Jamrud, in the direction of Dakka until 1920. It was then decided to construct the shorter line up the Khyber Pass to Landi Kotal, and the Afghan frontier about Landi Khana, whence there is a steep descent from the plateau to the valley of the Kabul and Dakka. This work has recently been completed, but the difficulties of gradient, etc., by this route have already been mentioned. The problem of protection by following the Khyber is doubtless simplified, but such a railway can never prove of much utility in a commercial sense, in the years to come, though it possibly fulfils the more pressing strategic requirements of the present.

I believe that, hereafter, when public opinion in Afghanistan has become more enlightened, and roads, motors and railways develop into a common feature of that conservative country, the main line of railway communication between India and Afghanistan will be by the Kabul River, and that the Khyber route will ultimately be abandoned in its favour. Recent developments of the railway policy in Kenya Colony somewhat strengthen that belief. When Macdonald carried out the preliminary survey for the Uganda Railway in 1891–92, he advocated, with rare prescience, the adoption of a route from Lake

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Nakuru over the Mau Escarpment, via the Uasin Gishu plateau, to Lake Victoria near the mouth of the Nzoia River. His recommendation was turned down when the line came to be built a few years later; and a shorter, but more difficult, route was taken from Nakuru to the present terminus on the lake at Kisumu. Time has shown that Macdonald's advocacy of the Uasin Gishu route, in view of the likely traffic from Uganda and the lake, and the future development of British East Africa generally, was thoroughly sound. After an interval of nearly thirty years, the Uasin Gishu line is now being pushed forward with energy to meet the crying needs of that fertile region, which should have been opened out long years before, had the railway but traversed it.

But, to resume my narrative. I decided to spend the interlude between the Kabul River and Zhob Valley surveys in a visit to my parents, then at Secunderabad, for I had not seen my father for more than five years, and my mother for nearly two. A long hot railway journey of several days was entailed, both going from and returning to Lahore; but I passed a very pleasant fortnight with my people, and got in a good deal of cricket, racquets, and riding, as well as seeing much of this great cantonment of Southern India, and Hyderabad, the capital of the Nizam's Dominions.

Picking up my camp kit, etc., on my return to Lahore, I travelled to Quetta with a party of R.E. officers, also destined for the Zhob Valley survey. All the quarters in the Club and dâk bungalow were full on our arrival, as a number of officers had assembled at Quetta in connection with the Zhob Valley Field Force, then concentrating near Khanai, three stations down the line, prior to marching down the Zhob. Consequently we pitched our tents in the compound of the dâk bungalow, and had our meals at the Club during the few days we remained at Quetta.

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Before relating our experiences during the Zhob Valley Railway Survey, it may be as well to say something here about its object, and the country in which our labours lay. The Kabul River Railway, we have seen, was designed to facilitate the maintenance of a force operating in Afghanistan, along the historical highway leading through the Khyber Pass. In order to bring Peshawur, however, into more direct railway communication with Quetta, on the south-west flank of the exposed frontier, Sir James Browne desired a detailed examination to be made of the country lying between Dera Ismail Khan on the Indus—some 200 miles down-stream of Attock—and Quetta. The distance apart of these two frontier stations, by the route sought through the Zhob Valley, was roughly 350 miles; and a great saving in distance and time would be effected if Quetta could be thus linked up with a line (since constructed) running along the east, or left, bank of the Indus from Attock to Mari, and south towards Sukkur.

The Zhob district is situated in the north-east corner of Baluchistan, and has an area of close on 10,000 square miles. The country is for the greater part mountainous, but the southern side is traversed by the Zhob Valley, and the northern by the valley of the Kundar, which later joins the Gomal. The chief inhabitants of this area are the Kakars, who possessed little military organization at that period, and were badly armed, for the trade in rifles smuggled into Afghanistan from the Persian Gulf had not touched the Zhob. The Kakars had no love for the British, though they tolerated them, since they were powerless to do otherwise. Still, had they an opportunity to give trouble in times of difficulty, they would, doubtless, have made good use of it.

In the upper 80 or 90 miles of its course the Zhob Valley runs generally in an easterly direction; and then swings N.N.E. for about 130 miles before it is joined by

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the Gomal from the west. Here the territory of the turbulent Waziris is entered.

It will be realized that this fresh railway scheme of Sir James Browne was far more ambitious than the Kabul River one. A great extent of country, of which little was known, had to be closely examined from a railway point of view; and hundreds of miles of alternative alignments would have to be surveyed in order to determine the least expensive route to be followed. Hence the command of the survey operations was entrusted to Major (now Colonel Sir) Buchanan Scott, R.E., an officer of wide railway experience, who had been one of Sir James Browne's Executive Engineers during the construction of the Harnai Railway.

As all field work was to be completed in the cold weather season of 1890–91 alone, Major Scott organized the Expedition into five survey divisions, each consisting of three R.E. and two infantry officers, with a subordinate staff similar to that employed by Macdonald on the Kabul River survey. That survey party formed one of the divisions of the new Zhob Valley Survey, and took the field at the Quetta end of the line towards the end of September, with two others. The two remaining divisions commenced work from the Dera Ismail Khan end somewhat later, as the heat in the plains, there less than 600 feet above sea level, was still great.[1]

[1] The following R.E. officers were engaged on the survey:
Engineer-in-Chief, Major Buchanan Scott, C.I.E.
Personal Assistant, Capt. Walton.
No. 1 Divn., Capt. J. R. L. Macdonald, Lieut. P. G. Twining, Lieut. H. H. Austin.
No. 2 Divn., Lieut. G. S. McD. Elliott, Lieuts. McElhinny and Carmichael.
No. 3 Divn., Capt. J. W. Pringle, Lieuts. Moore and Thuillier.
No. 4 Divn., Capt. J. E. Capper, Lieuts. Twiss, Macaulay and Lathbury.
No. 5 Divn., Capt. C. H. Cowie, Lieuts. Tomlin, Burn and Boileau.
The two last divisions started work on the Dera Ismail Khan end of the line, the others from the Quetta end.

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The Zhob Field Force of 1890, under the command of Sir George White, and accompanied by Sir Robert Sandeman, was assembled at Khanozai, some 16 miles from Khanai Station on the Harnai Railway, at the same time as the survey parties. This military force was destined for the punishment of those sections of the Shirani tribe which had refused to meet Sir Robert Sandeman at Apozai the previous January, and had for long behaved in a truculent manner. It marched off for the Zhob Valley on October 1st, and the survey divisions commenced work at once from Khanai, on the projected railway.

It is scarcely possible, within reasonable limits, to follow closely the numerous routes surveyed by five separate, though co-operating, parties during the seven or eight months they were working in the field. Macdonald's division had the good fortune, however, to traverse a very large tract of country between Khanai and the junction of the Zhob and Gomal Rivers; and it was given an opportunity also of seeing something of the stupendous gorge through which the Gomal pierces its way, when joined by the Zhob, to reach the plains of India. Consequently, we travelled practically along the entire length of the proposed railway, save that portion lying on the trans-Indus plain. We saw little then, it is true, of the country between Kajuri Kach and Dera Ismail Khan; but a few years later, during the Waziristan Expedition of 1894–95, I was able to bridge the hiatus when proceeding from Wana to Tank and Dera Ismail Khan by way of Kajuri Kach and the Gomal, over the Gwaleri Kotal.

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CHAPTER X

THE ZHOB VALLEY SURVEY

Khanai, the starting-point of the projected Zhob Valley Railway, and three stations down the Harnai Railway from Quetta, is situated about 5,450 feet above sea level. The suggested alignment immediately commenced a steady ascent to Khanozai, and up the Sarkhab Valley to the summit of the Mehtarzai Kotal (7,260 feet), the water-parting between the Sarkhab and Zhob; and as a rise of over 1,800 feet occurs in this first 35 miles of the line, a somewhat serpentine course became necessary when surmounting the steeper slopes of the valley, in order to gain distance for a gradient of 1 in 100.

Although it was still only the end of October when our work reached the Mehtarzai, the cold at nights in our camp near its summit was severe. Basins of water in our tents were found frozen solid every morning; whilst the winds to which we were at the same time subjected were of a piercing nature. Thus the relief was considerable when the progress of the survey enabled our camps to be moved lower down into the Zhob. The fall from the Mehtarzai was, however, something like 1 in 30 at first, which entailed much zigzagging during the descent of 1,250 feet to Hindu Bagh, distant about 16 miles from the top of the pass.

The villages hereabouts teemed with huge, thick-furred ferocious dogs, which invariably rushed out at strangers approaching them; and the nuisance became so intolerable when passing these habitations, in going to and from

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our work, that showers of stones, and spears in the shape of iron-pointed bamboo survey flags, had frequently to be brought into use to keep the savage brutes at bay.

As winter was fast approaching, the three divisions which had been surveying various tracts of country in the neighbourhood of Quetta now received orders to cease work in that area for the present, and to march down to Apozai. Thence the course of the Zhob and Gomal Rivers, and other alternative routes, were to be surveyed during the most severe months; and a return would be made to complete the upper portion of the railway alignment in the spring season.

Thus it was with light hearts we set forth for more genial climes, as the high hills around us were already capped with snow when we marched from Hindu Bagh on November 22nd. The district road constructed from Khanai ceased at Hindu Bagh, and onwards there existed but a rough path leading down the Zhob for 130 miles to Apozai. In this distance the Zhob falls about 1,500 feet only—from 6,000 feet to 4,500 feet above sea level—and as the valley is generally open, and several miles in width, it presents few difficulties from a railway point of view.

Not many incidents of note disturbed the even tenor of our way. White men were rarely met, though we did camp one night alongside an Irrigation Officer, examining the possibilities of the country under the protection of a small escort. While dining with us he scoffed at any likelihood of molestation at the hands of local natives; but soon after our arrival at Apozai, he came tumbling in there, too. A gang of *budmashes* on the rampage had suddenly appeared in the vicinity of Gwal Haidarzai, where we had forgathered, and he wisely considered it no longer a healthy spot in which to linger with his few sepoys.

Apozai, though a veritable outpost of Empire in those

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View of Apozai, Zhob Valley, 1890.

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days, was in telegraphic communication with Loralai, and with one or two lesser posts farther down the Zhob, such as Mir Ali Khel. The country round was still in a very unsettled state, however, and officers were not permitted to go out riding except in pairs, and armed with revolvers. Thefts of camels, and other transport animals, by tribesmen were frequent, and fanatical outbreaks common. A few days before our advent a gang of coolies, employed in road-making 10 miles down the Zhob, were cut up by a band of *ghazis*; while several camels were stolen from our divisions during their short halt at Apozai.

We spent some days in preliminary surveys near Apozai, in the hilly tract about 13 miles to the west of the station, beyond the fordable Zhob River; and then returned to accompany the 3rd Baluchis and a squadron of the 12th Bengal Cavalry, to Gul Kach. This column was joined by Lieutenant (now Colonel Sir Henry) McMahon as Political Officer, and commanded by Colonel Nicholson, a noted frontier soldier and the husband, incidentally, of "Laurence Hope." Among other young subalterns in the Baluch battalion, were the two brothers Jacob, the elder of whom is now Field-Marshal Sir Claud, and the younger a Major-General.

A personal escort of fifty men of the Baluchis, under an Indian officer, was furnished for our survey division; but the whole force marched together through some 50 miles of very difficult and broken country, the abode of many bad characters, that intervened between Apozai and the Gomal River by this route.

Here at Gul Kach we were about 3,000 feet above sea level, and our environment was wild in the extreme. The summits of the higher hills around were already white with snow; and our camp on the right bank of the river, towards the eastern limit of the Domandi plain, overlooked its broad stony bed, down which five or six fordable channels were flowing. The opposite bank, and

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the country beyond to the north, was then temporarily recognized as the territory of the Amir of Afghanistan; but was later allotted to India, in accordance with the terms of the Durand Treaty. Near by, to our right, lay the entrance to the gorge of the Gomal, which extends almost without a break for 25 miles to its junction with the Zhob.

A short distance above the gorge, and on the left bank, one's gaze was arrested by a confused mass of clay hills and moulds beneath which, if local legend is to be believed, are buried the ruins of Sodom. The Almighty had, it is said, become so wroth at the evil doings of its inhabitants that He plucked the city up by the roots, and hurled it back into position upside down. Hence this turmoil of sand and clay, reputed to be haunted by *jin*, or spirits, to this day. A horseman and two women are said to be seen at intervals, wandering disconsolately among the ruins; but they did not cross our path.

The Baluchis and cavalry went into permanent camp at Gul Kach as a covering force for the various survey divisions working in the neighbourhood. One division, under Captain (now Colonel Sir John) Pringle, was to survey down the Zhob from Apozai to Kajuri Kach; another, under Captain (now Brigadier-General) G. S. McD. Elliott, between Apozai and Gul Kach; and ours between Gul Kach and Kajuri Kach. The two other divisions, under Captain (now Major-General) C. H. Cowie, and Captain (now Major-General Sir John) Capper, were at work between Dera Ismail Khan and the exit of the Gomal into the plains of India, and in the Gomal gorge itself below its junction with the Zhob, respectively.

Now it had long been known, by the authorities in India, that the Gomal was a great highway of Afghan traders (Powindahs) between Central Asia and India. Yet, up to 1889, our knowledge of this important line of

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communication was extremely scanty, resting almost entirely on native information. The upper course of the Gomal, flowing generally E.N.E. from the Zermelan plain to join the Zhob, was still but vaguely known. Indeed, from where the river entered the gorge that commences from the eastern limit of that plain, and carves its way to Kajuri Kach, remained a *terra incognita* until traversed by our division of the Zhob Valley survey between December, 1890, and February, 1891.

Since we were the first Europeans to visit and spend some weeks in these wild gorges to which Waziri territory extended, a few words about the several inhabitants of these inhospitable regions may not be out of place. The Waziris, as is well known, have been a thorn in the flesh of the Indian Government for many years past; and the subjugation of these recalcitrant mountaineers, veritable will-o'-the wisps, has been a long and costly task. Nor can this be wondered at, when it is remembered that they inhabit a region of great physical difficulties, abounding in rugged ridges and deep rocky gorges radiating from lofty ranges whose summits attain an altitude of 11,000 feet above sea level. It is probably due in some measure to the barren character of their country, and its lack of resources, that the Waziri in general, and the Mahsud clan in particular, look elsewhere to supplement their means of existence. Naturally brave and warlike, they have no scruples in depriving their less virile neighbours of what they do not themselves possess, by fierce forays carried out with rapidity and daring. Hence one may suitably apply the term Ishmaelite to this race, for their hands are certainly against every man's, and most men's against theirs. Nevertheless, the Waziri does not seem weighed down by this distinction, and doubtless still inwardly believes, what for many generations he openly boasted, that he alone of all the Afghan clans remains free.

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Be that as it may, the whole tribe are thieves, and are proud of their prowess in the subtle art of plunder. Unless paid blackmail, they light-heartedly raid their neighbours and carry off cattle, camels, rifles and aught else they can lay their hands upon, for all is grist to their mill. Yet hospitality is recognized as a prime virtue among them; and each village has a place set apart for guests, who are welcomed at dawn and sundown, when prayers are being said, after which they are provided with food. The cost of hospitality is borne by the whole village; and the Waziris claim that they have no poor, because whenever a family is brought low the rest of the clan subscribe to re-establish it. Thus there is little incentive for the Waziri to quit his wild home, and seek his fortune elsewhere; so he remains in the hills all the year round. Which is probably one reason why he does not enlist readily in the ranks of the Indian Army.

Though the Waziris profess to recognize no law or will but their own, they do observe some rough form of justice in their intercourse with each other, by inflicting money fines for murder, and other assaults within the community; and despite plundering being one of the main activities of this turbulent tribe, it is rarely from each other that they offend in this respect, since some honour still obtains among these notorious thieves. But woe betide any wayfarer who happens to fall into the clutches of these marauders, if of an alien tribe.

This Ishmaelite outlook of the Waziri naturally caused him to be regarded as an enemy of mankind by other tribes dwelling within raiding radius; and by those accustomed to traverse certain routes leading to and from India, located within striking distance of Waziri territory. Of such routes the gorge of the Gomal, above its junction with the Zhob, is that perhaps most frequented by caravans proceeding from Afghanistan to the plains of India; and this was for generations a happy hunting resort of

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Waziri bands. Between the Powindahs—migratory Ghilzai warrior-traders, whose homes are about Ghazni—and the Waziris, it was a matter of war to the knife; for the Waziris never lost an opportunity of raiding Powindah caravans when these twice annually passed along the Gomal, going to and returning from India.

How great were the possibilities of loot, during these migrations, will be realized when it is stated that about 50,000 of these nomads, men, women and children, accompanied by thousands of camels, and immense flocks of goats and sheep, entered the Dera Ismail Khan district every year by the Gomal route, from the middle of October to the middle of December; and returned to Ghazni between March 20th and May 10th. It is small wonder, then, that these Powindahs marched through the Gomal in regular armies, and were well organized to meet the attack of Waziris, who were ever on the look-out to cut off stragglers, and to fire on the Powindahs from the heights dominating the tracks followed. Hence, a captured Waziri experienced short shrift at the hands of the Powindahs. He could expect no mercy, so usually resigned himself to his fate—a simple one, for he invariably had his throat cut as though he were a sheep, and was buried on the spot without any further to-do.

The Powindah method of dealing with the hated Waziri was gentlemanly, however, in comparison with the punishment meted out to him when caught by Nasirs. In each case death was all he could hope for; but he now had the questionable pleasure of observing, as a preliminary, a metal plate being heated in a fire until it became nearly red hot, the purport of which he quite well understood. The executioner would then step forward, and with one deft stroke of his keen tulwar, completely behead his victim. Before the blood had time to gush forth, the hot plate would be clapped on to the trunk by assistants, whereupon the Waziri's headless body would

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perform a series of leaps and bounds, to beat of drum and the undiluted glee of Nasirs gathered round to watch its antics. Thus was the Waziri loved by such co-religionists as he sought to murder and rob.

Near by, but mostly beyond our border in this area, a large tract of country is occupied by the powerful and warlike Sulaiman Khel tribe. A considerable number of them also migrate to India in the cold weather, and there they behave well enough, though they have the reputation of being very rough customers outside British territory. Between them and the Waziris, likewise, there is perpetual strife, and they seldom lose the chance of waylaying each other when the odds are about four to one in favour of the assailants.

Soon after our arrival at Gul Kach, Macdonald deputed me to lay out a road down the gorge if possible, in order to enable us to work towards Kajuri Kach by it. I was thus the first white man to enter the gorge; but after following it for a couple of miles it became clear that much labour and time would be involved in constructing a camel track through, owing to the limited means at our disposal, and the precipitous nature of the rocky defile carved out by the river as its course. The idea had to be abandoned, therefore, and it was decided that the division should march to Kajuri Kach, and work up-stream to Gul Kach instead.

Since the gorge was impracticable for heavily-laden camels, MacMahon supplied us with a dozen Sulaiman Khels, who were to conduct us into Amir's territory across the river, over the Kandori Kotal and thence to the Gomal again, close to where the Toi, draining the Wana plain to the north, joined it on the left bank. These twelve gentlemen were fine specimens of humanity, their leader standing not less than 6 feet 3 inches in height, and broad in proportion. Although mostly of villainous mien, they inspired a certain amount of confidence in their

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ability to protect our sanctity, by reason of their warlike appearance, for they were little short of perambulating arsenals. Each carried a *jezail*, the old flint-lock musket, and a goodly supply of powder in flasks, and spherical bullets, for the mediæval weapon. A curved tulwar, flint-lock pistol, and an evil-looking dagger thrust into his waist-band, further reinforced his armament.

So long as they remained on our side of the river, and under the sheltering care of the battalion and cavalry, never was seen such a stout set of fellows. But, alas, when our small survey party left the covering force, waded across the Gomal, threaded its way through the mounds of Sodom, and turned away up the broken slopes leading to the Kandori Kotal, our sureties began to lose a good deal of their pristine swagger. Their superb chief somehow contrived to give us the slip, whilst we clambered with our camels to the summit of the pass, 700 feet above the Gomal bed; because, we subsequently learned, his brother had been shot dead thereabouts by the Waziris but a short time before. He deemed it prudent, therefore, to return to MacMahon at Gul Kach, leaving his colleagues to conduct us to our destination. Possibly he felt he might be unable to curb his desire for revenge should we, unhappily, stumble across a few Waziris during our trek, and thus perhaps create complications. Whilst seated on the summit discussing a light lunch, we did, in fact, discern the forms of men standing out against the skyline of the hills enclosing the pass, 1,500 to 2,000 feet above us, but they made no attempt to molest us.

The Kandori clearly boasted an evil reputation, however; for stone cairn memorials to those who had met with violent deaths were seen at intervals. Just irregular heaps of stones they were, at the side of the rough track; and on these the interested traveller would toss his quota as he passed, in accordance with his sympathies. Thus

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was homage paid to any particular cairn that appealed to him as denoting the spot where a Waziri, or one of the many enemies of that tribe, had bitten the dust.

Our good Sulaimans, nevertheless, steered our course for some 15 miles through very intricate country, the descent on the far side of the pass being difficult for our camels, owing to the broken, rocky nature of the track in the first 2 miles. We then entered a narrow valley, down which about ten parallel paths ran side by side, for we were now on the Powindah highway to and from India; and this we followed along the bed of divers nullahs, the last of which led us to the bank of the Gomal, a short distance above its junction with the Toi. The Gomal was again forded, and camp pitched on a small stony plot of high ground, known as Toi Khula, overlooking the stream.

By this détour in, then, Amir's territory, we had circumvented some 12 to 13 miles of the sinuous Gomal gorge impracticable for camels; and were now half-way to Kajuri Kach. Next day was Christmas Day, so we remained there; but having got us so far the Sulaimans began to clamour for permission to return to Gul Kach, vowing that if they proceeded farther with us they would inevitably be cut to pieces by the Waziris when they set out for their homes again. In short, they endeavoured to convince us that we would be guilty of little less than murder, did we persist in taking them on. But the arrangement made at Gul Kach, and for which these men had been paid in advance, was that they should see us to Kajuri Kach; so they were held to their bargain, and shared our thoroughly miserable Christmas at Toi Khula.

At dawn the rain was pattering, not unpleasantly, on our tents—quite reminiscent of Home. But when a furious gale sprang up in addition, seasonable sensations vanished, for our tents were with difficulty restrained by their pegs and ropes from embarking on aerial flights;

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and we anxious occupants were chiefly engaged in clutching on to camp-tables, chairs and other articles, lest these should be transported bodily into the river below. As the hurricane blew straight from the snow-clad hills without, it was truly arctic in its bitterness, and intensified our discomfort. Our well-planned Christmas dinner, too, proved something of a frost, since the turkey, plum pudding and champagne, ordered from Lahore to do honour to the occasion, had become stranded at Dera Ismail Khan, and failed to reach us in time. When the turkey did eventually arrive in its air-tight tin, weeks later, it was accorded a decent burial, for there was no other use to which it could then be profitably put.

The gale continued throughout the night, and only died away in the early morning. It was horribly cold and freezing hard when we set out for Kajuri Kach; and the river had to be forded a number of times—a cheerless procedure as the water was waist deep and rapids frequent. This portion of the gorge was practicable, however, for transport animals, by crossing at intervals from one bank to the other, in order to take advantage of such narrow strips of gently sloping ground as existed between the foot of the cliffs and the river.

Camp was pitched on the right bank of the Gomal at its junction with the Zhob, which entered from the S.S.W. The stony beds of both streams here opened out to an astonishing extent, that of the Zhob being 500 to 600 yards wide, and the Gomal close on 400. As in times of flood both rivers completely cover their beds, a magnificent spectacle is then presented of their boisterous meeting.

A defensive post occupied by sixty Waziri levies was situated on the right bank of the Zhob, perched on high ground overlooking the junction; and was supposed to afford protection to all and sundry passers by, or camped under the shadow of its walls. Yet its presence probably

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gave but little satisfaction to our Sulaiman Khels on learning that a band of forty or fifty Waziris were on the rampage in the neighbourhood, and had recently caused trouble to Capper's division, then at work in the Gomal gorge a few miles below the junction of the two rivers.

These rogues had a day or two before waylaid Lathbury's Hindu syce, eased him of such cash as he had about him, stripped him naked, save for a thin cotton shirt, and sent him back to camp in this *negligé* attire. The weather being bitterly cold, the syce failed to regard the untimely jest in the same light as the witty Waziris. Next night the rascals went one better, and extracted a Snider carbine from under the head of one of the Pathan *khalassies*, who was sleeping on it as a pillow in his tent, at the same camp. The slumberer was not even aroused, nor the theft discovered until the morning, which suggests consummate skill on part of the thief.

And this state of things was going on within a few miles of the Waziri Levy Post; so it may be judged what safeguard it supplied against the depredations of other Waziri thieves in the neighbourhood. I say "other" advisedly, because the subsidized Waziri occupants of the post were not above taking part in plundering exploits themselves, when favourable opportunity offered.

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CHAPTER XI

FURTHER ZHOB EXPERIENCES

At Kajuri Kach we were in touch with Capper's division, which was camped some 5½ miles down the Gomal, below its junction with the Zhob. He was faced with the most difficult problem of the whole Zhob Valley line, that through "Browne's Gorge"—so named after Sir James Browne, the first European to view it—and invited us to come and see something of this really remarkable freak of nature, which we were only too anxious to do.

Crossing the broad bed of the Zhob just below the Levy Post, we proceeded down-stream to find ourselves soon confronted by a narrow opening between magnificent precipices, towering hundreds of feet above us. Here we had to leave the river bed, and followed a branch nullah on the left bank which led to a rough pathway cut by Capper in the slopes of the hills. Continuing over broken ground amid numerous fantastic pinnacles and ridges, we descended by a zigzag track to the bed of the Gomal again; and at once passed through a gap between two gigantic boulders, one 60 feet in height and as many yards in circumference. It went by the name of "Adam's Kark," for that early man is credited, in local lore, with having pasted his dough round this modest stone before baking it in a fire for his bread. Near by, was another curious shaped rock of some size, with a great hollow scooped out of it, and known as "Adam's Chilamchi," or basin, because he washed his

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hands in it prior to partaking of food. A turn to the left a short way on brought us to Capper's camp, perched on a small plot of ground on the left bank of the river, 15 to 20 feet above the water level, and closed in on all sides by stupendous precipices.

Later, we rode farther down the river bed, crossing and recrossing the stream which was then 30 to 40 yards wide, 3 feet deep at the fords, and flowing swiftly in a series of short rapids. A mile below Capper's camp the river made an extraordinary bend of nearly a complete circle of small radius before entering the famous "Browne's Gorge." We had to dismount at its mouth, and proceeded on foot by a rough path being constructed by Capper's Waziri coolies along the face of the cliffs, the scenery in this awesome cañon well-nigh baffling description.

The Gomal remains confined to a winding gorge of noble proportions for some 25 miles below Kajuri Kach before it enters the plains at Murtaza, distant about 18 miles from Tank. In the 50 or 60 miles between Murtaza and Dera Ismail Khan the railway would traverse open, though broken, plains presenting no special engineering difficulties. A considerable amount of cultivation exists thereabouts, for the irrigation of which the waters of the Gomal are practically all absorbed, and little usually reaches the Indus.

After this interesting and instructive glimpse of Capper's problems, Macdonald's division commenced work up the Gomal towards Gul Kach; and a few Dautanis were attached to our survey party in place of the Sulaiman Khels, who returned to their homes in fear and trembling lest they should encounter Waziris en route. The Dautanis were supposed to be at peace with Sulaimans and Waziris alike; and their presence in our camp was intended to serve as some safeguard against outside interference by the Waziris. Neverthe-

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less, as the survey progressed slowly up the gorge, and camp moved at intervals farther and farther up the Gomal, thefts and alarms became almost a nightly occurrence at one time. Though one could not entirely withhold admiration for the cool audacity of these Waziri thieves, their activities sorely interfered with our nights' rests after hard days of toil in the field.

In justice to the Waziri levies, however, I should add that, during the week our division was camped at Kajuri Kach, we were not molested by thieves. Our work then required camp to be moved some 6 miles up the Gomal to Shaidan, about midway to Toi Khula. Here the ground consisted of a series of small flat terraces, covered with black boulders and stones; and camp was pitched on one such terrace facing the river, with another terrace rising in rear and more or less defilading the camp from the hills and cliffs behind. Whilst in these regions our camps were laid out with great precision, almost to the fraction of a foot. They were rectangular in shape, the long sides approximately 50, and the shorter 30 yards in length. Tent ropes overlapped round the entire perimeter, save for the 10-foot roadway running through from one long face to the other; and just outside their entrances two sepoys' tents were pitched. Camels, mules and ponies were tethered close alongside one face of the camp under the eyes of the guard-tent; and sentries posted at short intervals around the whole circumference.

Taking the terrain to be traversed into consideration, it would seem no easy matter, then, for the most skilful of thieves to penetrate the cordon of sentries, and worm his way into the camp itself through all those tent ropes, particularly as we officers had excellent watch-dogs sharing our tents. Yet, shortly before the moon rose on January 5th, a Waziri managed to get right into the camp, and absconded with the entire change of

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kit belonging to a *khalassi*. He was certainly seen disappearing with his loot, and was fired on by a Baluch sentry; but his approach to the camp was never detected, and he got clean away.

This exploit was apparently intended merely as a feeler; for a night or two later when the sky was much overcast, a thunderstorm threatening, and rain falling at intervals, the camp was aroused at about 2 a.m. by the report of a rifle, followed by several others. We hastily donned our *poshteens*, buckled on belts with revolvers, snatched up our rifles and dived out of our tents, imagining a night attack, at least, was taking place. The Pathan *khalassies* were all at their alarm posts in no time, manning the gaps between the tents; so seeing all in readiness here we moved over to the guard-tent in rear of camp, whence the sepoys were still firing. There we learned that some thieves had managed to creep between the sentries and enter the camp, making a bolt for it under fire when detected.

A few had evidently not fled very far, and were ensconced behind several big rocks a short distance in front of the guard-tent; for, out of the darkness, stones were being pitched towards the tent and falling around us. It was senseless waste of ammunition to fire into the inky blackness, more particularly as the thieves were absolutely safe behind the rocks. So the sepoys were ordered to desist, and Gloster sallied forth with ten men to rout the rogues out from their lair. Not a sign of them did he see, however; but during his twenty minutes' patrol he stumbled upon a large packing-case, containing two dozen boxes of 100 cheroots each.

The thieves had abstracted this from the Swiss Cottage mess-tent, which occupied one corner of the perimeter at the end of the officers' line of tents. In spite of sentries and alert dogs close by, the expert rascals had boldly removed the case between the cordon of sentries

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ENTRANCE TO BROWNE'S GORGE, GOMAL RIVER.

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and out into the void, though it must have required a couple of men to carry it, owing to its bulk. And all this was done without making a sound or disturbing a soul in camp! They had, seemingly, only abandoned their booty when fire was opened upon their confederates detected within the camp.

To appreciate fully the skill of the feat, it might be added that, were you and I to attempt to pick our way across that stony terrace in the broad light of day, with no encumbrance of any sort and grass sandals on our feet, we would surely raise a rare commotion. This would be magnified, in the silence of night, to such an uproar as could not fail to awaken the most somnolent of sentries. There were ten watchful guardians distributed round the whole camp—a perimeter of about 300 yards, including the animal lines. The thieves must have passed within 10 or 15 yards of sentries, therefore, both coming and going.

One was faced by somewhat novel conditions in dealing with these Waziri thieves; and the sentries did not at first realize that the pitching of stones towards the camp from the darkness without formed an integral part of the plan of campaign of these rogues. Having worked their way to within striking distance of the camp, so to speak, even the cat-eyed Waziris were unable to locate the position of the sentries, for these were generally concealed in shallow pits around the perimeter, and did not tramp backwards and forwards along regular beats. Thus it was essential to mark down the sentry posts before further action could be safely embarked upon, and so the stone-throwing ruse was employed.

A sentry first subjected to the insult of having stones pitched in close juxtaposition to his place of concealment would probably imagine he had been spotted, and was being made a foolish target of. Indignantly, or nervously, as the case might be, he would reply by loosing off his

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rifle in the direction whence he thought the stones were being thrown. This was precisely what the Waziri wanted. The bullet would pass harmlessly over his head, and he had got that sentry's position marked down to a foot. Now for the next; and so on.

So far so good; but the Waziri had yet to traverse the intervening stony space between himself and the line of sentries, in order to enter the precincts of the camp—unheard and unobserved. How did he do it? It is obvious that his movements must now be very deliberate; but time was of little concern to these patient and persistent thieves, so long as they ultimately achieved success after the sentry had been lulled into a sense of security by stones ceasing to drop in his vicinity. Then, in a low crouching attitude, the serpent would crawl from his cover, and softly clear away with his hands the stones from the spot to which the next foot was to be advanced. Thus, step by step, with infinite caution and quite noiselessly, would he creep closer and closer, and finally pass between the line of sentries in the pitchy darkness of the night selected for his operations. The cold calm courage of the knave, and his inexhaustible patience, would be worthy of much admiration were these attributes directed into less reprehensible channels. But Waziri cunning, unfortunately, occasioned us much food for reflection during the period we were subjected to frequent night alarms, by reason of it.

It did not take long, however, to instil into the minds of the sentries that, by replying to the stones falling around them, they were but giving their positions away; so that little weakness of theirs was quickly quashed. We officers, too, often sat up for hours hidden in pits, hoping for a chance to take toll of these nocturnal prowlers; but they were wary birds, and evidently endowed with the gift of acute scent, as well as of uncanny sight in the dark, for not one of us ever obtained a glimpse

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of, or shot at, these pests. Yet, shortly after abandoning the vigil, in order to snatch a few hours' sleep before the labours of another day, we would probably hear the "bang, bang" of rifles, and be out of our beds again in a trice to investigate the cause.

The causes were sometimes comic, but generally the reverse. I give one example of each from our experiences at Toi Khula, to which camp was moved from Shaidan on January 9th. It was pitched on the same site as that of Christmas Day, on a flat plot of high ground immediately overlooking the river, the drop down to which there was precipitous; whilst in the stony bed was a considerable patch of tall reeds through which the icy stream flowed. Directly opposite the camp a huge conglomerate cliff rose sheer out of the bed on the left bank to a height of 200 or 300 feet, and indicated the place just below which the Toi entered the Gomal.

The first night or two after settling down into a new camp we were usually left alone; or, so it seemed, though the Waziris probably employed the time in getting a hang of our fresh arrangements before embarking on operations. Their initial exploit at Toi Khula was announced by terror-stricken shouts in the small hours of the morning by one of the *khalassies*. These were sufficiently blood-curdling to convince one that the wretched man was having his throat cut, and caused us to hurry to his aid, and that of the other occupants of his tent. There it came out that the man had been a prey to bad nightmare, and awoke with a jerk to feel someone trying to pull the socks off his feet! This proved too much for him in his disorganized condition, and he let out the succession of yells that had thrilled light sleepers throughout the camp. The Waziri was seen by no one, so must have slipped away in the darkness when the *khalassi* gave tongue. He departed without the

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socks, but with a couple of useful cooking-pots to compensate him for having to continue his tramps barefooted.

Another week of almost nightly alarums and excursions followed; and then we had the mortification of losing the only rifle captured by Waziris throughout these series of séances. It was taken from one of our Baluch regulars too, which made the circumstance all the more regrettable, being entirely due to the man's own stupidity. It had been a clear, frosty moonlight night, a priceless boon to the wanderer in wild regions, and had passed peacefully. But just after the moon set, the sentry sought to warm himself at a fire some 10 yards distant from his post, and which, incidentally, had no right to be burning. Instead of taking his rifle along with him, however, the oaf laid it against a rock and sauntered off to the fire. In the twinkling of an eye two Waziris sprang up from nowhere; and whilst one discharged his pistol at the now unarmed sentry the other seized the Martini, and both were gone again like a flash. Before any of the other sentries could get a shot at them, they disappeared over the low rocky cliff into the bed of the river, and vanished into the reeds, through which they gained the opposite bank unseen. A picquet was at once sent in pursuit, but small chance had it of overtaking the rascals, to whom every recess along the course of the Toi was as familiar by night as by day. So that Martini was struck off the strength, and the sentry conveyed under arrest to regimental headquarters at Gul Kach, to be tried by court-martial for gross carelessness.

After a time we grew somewhat weary of the ceaseless attentions of the Waziris by night, though we seldom saw any signs of them by day, whilst engaged on survey work in the gorge. Ultimately, we determined to circumvent the ruffians by constructing low stone walls

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around the entire camp perimeter. These light structures were too high to step over, and so flimsily erected that any portion interfered with came down with such a clatter as could not fail to give the alarm at once. This simple device was quickly run up, thanks to the fine crop of stones always to hand, and proved most efficacious. Henceforth, during the next month in the Gomal, we usually enjoyed undisturbed nights in bed; and the Waziri thief had to admit defeat.

Apart from the trouble of thieves, the survey from Kajuri Kach was much hampered by the vile weather, which frequently prevented outdoor work being done. What with rain, furious gales, snow, hard frosts, a swollen river, and difficulties of terrain to contend with, it was February 16th before our survey joined up at Gul Kach with that of Elliott's division, which had been working to that spot from Apozai. A few days later we marched by a new route across the Girdao plain to Mir Ali Khel, about midway between Apozai and Kajuri Kach along the Zhob.

Here a strong post had been built, and was garrisoned by 150 men of the 2nd Sikhs and half a squadron of the 3rd Punjab Cavalry from Dera Ismail Khan. Notwithstanding their presence this locality possessed an unsavoury reputation for lawlessness. Outrages were of frequent occurrence up and down the frontier road under construction, and night alarms were an almost everyday affair. Consequently, Lieutenant Vesey, the officer then in command of the post, led a stirring life, and had many a grisly, sometimes humorous, story to unfold during the several occasions we were encamped outside the stalwart walls of his fort. Even there we did not escape nocturnal attention from gangs of blackguards who infested the wild neighbourhood.

The next month was employed on various branch surveys between Mir Ali Khel and Gul Kach; and we

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spent the best part of a week, too, about the Kandori Kotal, whither we returned to examine an alternative line, avoiding the upper half of the Gomal gorge near Gul Kach.

We were back at Mir Ali Khel for the last time on March 20th; and the following day commenced the return journey to Apozai by the Zhob River route, bound for resumption of survey work on the upper sections of the line between Apozai and Hindu Bagh. A fine frontier road along the right bank made the march of 36 miles in three stages a very simple business. But the road by no means adhered entirely to the course of the river which, confined between close-set heights, indulges in some perplexing contortions in this area. Nevertheless, it became abundantly clear to us that the Zhob between Apozai and Kajuri Kach presents far less difficulties, from a railway point of view, than the Gomal alternative between the two places.

Divers traders and other natives attached themselves to our column with their laden camels and mules during our march from Mir Ali Khel, as the lawlessness then rife in this district caused them to seek protection under our wing. Even so, we met one poor wayfarer who had just been set upon by Waziris in a turn of the road on ahead. He had been robbed of all he possessed, and badly slashed as well in three places by their keen swords. Macdonald and Gloster, on advanced guard, started off with a few sepoys in pursuit of the ruffians, but saw no traces of them. One seldom did; yet they were always lurking amid the hills on the look-out for whom they might devour.

Pringle's division, which had earlier surveyed the Pishin section of the upper alternatives, and had recently completed that from Apozai to Kajuri Kach by the Zhob route, now began to work up from Apozai towards Hindu Bagh; while Macdonald's division marched up

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the Zhob to the vicinity of Hindu Bagh, and worked down the valley to meet Pringle. This survey progressed at so rapid a rate that by April 19th the gap of 130 miles had been bridged by the two divisions, and the railway alignment clearly marked out on the ground between those two places.

The next fortnight was employed, however, in making further improvements in the original alignment on both sides of the Mehtarzai Kotal. Thus it was May 5th before our work in the field was finished, and we were free to return to Quetta.

During our five months' absence from this area of the Zhob, the appearance of the country had undergone a remarkable change. In the autumn all was bleak, dried-up and drab; but in the meantime the seemingly sterile stony soil had been quickened by winter sleet and snow. Now, in the spring, one's eyes were refreshed with a sense of colour. The former all-pervading sun-scorched camel thorn had burst forth into green young leaves, creating an air of life and cheerfulness. And, strangest of all, out of the unpromising earth bulbs and flowers had forced their way, and were in full bloom. The ground was gay with red and yellow tulips, poppies, hyacinth-like blossoms, purple bells, diminutive pansies, and other species of wild flowers which almost brought beauty into our surroundings.

Nor were we the only ones to appreciate the altered conditions of Nature, for myriads of locusts now assembled—as in the Kabul River at the same season the previous year—to take toll of the green refreshment supplied. On several occasions whilst at work, the sun was completely obscured for an hour or more by dense clouds of countless locusts overhead. The ground, too, was thick with them, and they were gathered up in sacksful by the Kakars, who dry their bodies and grind them into flour. Traffic up the Harnai Railway was

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even impeded by hosts of these insects, for their crushed bodies so lubricated the rails that locomotives and carriages had some difficulty in surmounting the stiff gradients in places.

The three remaining divisions had meanwhile been carrying out various important alternative surveys in the uplands; and at the close of the season's work, Major Scott could congratulate himself on the fact that a most thorough examination of every likely route between Quetta and Dera Ismail Khan had been made. The personal energy of Major Scott throughout the work in the field had been inspiring to all. He was ever on the move from one division to another, spending a few days in this camp, and then in that; so that he might see for himself the difficulties of terrain, and advise how best to overcome them.

He was frequently accompanied by Mrs. Scott, who defied every form of hardship and danger, so enthusiastic was she to learn all about the country, and the multifarious problems that confronted her husband in the great task committed to his charge.

Since those days the railway from Quetta has been extended in a north-westerly direction to the Afghan frontier at Chaman, by piercing the Khojak Pass with a tunnel 2¾ miles in length. But no attempt has yet been made to connect Quetta by a broad-gauge railway with Dera Ismail Khan, via the Zhob and Gomal. This, though shown to be perfectly feasible, and favoured by Lord Kitchener, is presumably due to the decline of the Russian menace; and to the costly nature of the undertaking, as disclosed by the investigations of the Zhob Valley Railway Survey parties in 1891.

Nevertheless, a 2-foot gauge line was built from Khanai to Hindu Bagh some years ago, in order to convey valuable chrome deposits thence to the main railway system; and this light line is now being extended down

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the Zhob, and seems likely to be carried through to Fort Sandeman—formerly Apozai. The large increase of the garrison at that cantonment in recent years has added much to the difficulties of maintaining this force in so advanced a position, without the aid of a light railway. It may happen, therefore, that in the years to come the Zhob Valley Railway will yet bring Peshawur and Quetta into closer touch with each other along the North-West Frontier of India.

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CHAPTER XII

A GLIMPSE OF FOUR CONTINENTS

On completion of the Zhob Valley Survey, the Scotts and the R.E. officers of all five divisions assembled at Dalhousie, where, during the summer months of 1891, comprehensive reports, plans and estimates for the projected railway were prepared from the information gained in the field. After seven or eight months in the wilds of Baluchistan, it was natural that advantage should be taken of this opportunity to combine work with pleasure, and the Dalhousie season of 1891 was for long associated with the sojourn of the Sappers there that year. All kinds of entertainments were got up by us throughout the months of June, July and August; and these culminated in a Fancy Dress Ball in September, to which the whole station was invited, when our work neared its close.

General Sir Hugh Gough, V.C., commanding the Lahore District at that period, passed the greater part of the hot weather with his staff at Dalhousie, and was a regular attendant with his wife and daughters at most of our functions. This fine old soldier certainly seemed to enjoy himself thoroughly on such occasions; for he was always so cheery, and entered so whole-heartedly into our efforts to entertain, that he and his family were quickly established as among our best friends in this Himalayan retreat, since they were most kind to us.

The month of September saw the end of our labours, and the sad day came when a general dispersal of the

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R.E.'s commenced. I found myself posted to the Military Works at Mandalay; and en route to Calcutta visited the wonderful Golden Temple of the Sikhs at Amritsar, and traversed the town that was to gain such unenviable notoriety nearly thirty years later for its violent anti-British outbreak, which was so courageously handled by General Dyer.

It was still the height of the monsoon, and the damp, muggy heat at Calcutta, where I was detained several days waiting for the mail steamer to sail for Rangoon, proved very trying after the dry heat of the Punjab. Yet those days proved a real joy compared with the hideous three spent at sea in a cockle-shell of a boat, while crossing the Bay of Bengal.

I was greeted on arrival in harbour by my good friend Lieutenant (now Major-General) G. A. Leslie, R.E., who had been captain of the Shop football XV our second season there; and was driven in his trap to the bungalow at Monkey Point, some 4 or 5 miles down the river, which he was sharing with A. J. Pilcher, another old Sapper friend and Clifton schoolfellow. These two subalterns were in charge of the submarine mining station at Monkey Point—one of the dampest of British possessions at that time of the year, I should imagine. Their bungalow was erected on tall piles, on the bank of the estuary, and at high tide was surrounded by water, save for a causeway that led from dry land to the stables on the ground floor of their habitation, so one could hear the animals beneath one. Nowhere before had I experienced so moisture-laden an atmosphere. Boots grew whiskers of mould within twenty-four hours; whilst under-garments, and other clothes, had to be spread out over wicker frames, with charcoal braziers burning below, to prevent them absorbing the moisture and to ensure some semblance of being dry before wear.

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Nevertheless, my kind hosts appeared quite acclimatized to their amphibious surroundings, while Pilcher still possessed a piano and kept up his singing, which had been so cheery a feature of guest-nights in our Chatham days. For nearly a week I remained as their guest, and they treated me to a right royal time, showing me over the amazing Shwe Dagon pagoda, and numerous places of note about Rangoon, the Gymkhana, Pegu Club, and other resorts of the European society in the town.

The Shwe Dagon was, undoubtedly, the most impressive of all, with its wonderful golden spire-like dome visible from so great a distance around; while one could not but marvel at the life and bustle in its long stepped corridors, thronged with daintily attired flower and candle-sellers, and which led to the huge platform on which the main structure stood. Its exterior, too, holds a peculiar charm for the new-comer, surrounded as it is by numerous small pagodas, and tiny temples of ornate design and intricate carvings, containing Buddhas of contemplative mien, encompassed by lavishly decorated walls and ceilings, ablaze with gold and silver tinsel, panels of glass mosaics, and other brilliant effects. Multitudes of little bells tinkling brightly in the breeze added to the cheerful aspect of the scene, which was still further enhanced by the gay costumes and smiling faces of the swarms of devout worshippers at this renowned Buddhist shrine.

We nearly always dined out somewhere, and the headlong manner in which their diminutive Burmese ponies, little over 12 hands in height, bustled us home in their traps, after, was a revelation to me. One such drive in the dark I recall when Leslie's "tat" was bowling along at something like 20 miles an hour after dinner at the Pegu Club. He and I were sitting in the front of the low trap, and the syce behind, with his back to

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us. Turning up a side road, we suddenly came unawares upon an ill-lit timber barrier placed across it. We were on it almost as soon as we saw it, and before Leslie had a chance to check the pony, the little beggar was under the spar and holding blithely on his course. We threw our bodies and heads back just in the nick of time, the spar sweeping the cheroot out of my mouth as I crouched my very lowest; but we heard an ominous "whump" behind, immediately the spar had shaved past our faces. As soon as Leslie could pull up we looked more closely into the matter. The back of the seat of the trap seemed to have survived all right; but the syce had completely vanished.

We picked him up presently, more astonished than hurt. In blissful ignorance of what so unexpectedly confronted us, he had retained his upright position when we dived under the barrier, and was caught in the small of his back by the spar, which whisked him clean off his perch and sent him sprawling on all fours into the road. It was a lucky escape, for had the spar been a foot or two lower it would have struck the trap itself, and probably reduced it to matchwood at the pace we were travelling.

A railway journey of nearly 400 miles from Rangoon landed me and my two fox-terriers at Mandalay within the twenty-four hours; and very interesting I found it, as the country and its inhabitants differed greatly from anything seen by me during the previous two and a half years spent in India, and along the North-West Frontier. The people seemed such cheery, care-free souls, lovers of laughter, and disinclined to take themselves so seriously as the majority of the dwellers in Ind. The Mongolian-featured men, for example, with sallow complexions and a slight moustache as their only face adornment, if we except a gigantic cheroot with white leaf wrapping seldom seen out of their mouths. They were generally

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gaily dressed, too, a silk scarf bound round their long hair, a short white jacket about their bodies, and a species of skirt, often of coloured silk, falling from the waist to a little above the feet.

On the whole, however, these lazy, good-humoured beings are far less attractive than their women-kind, who possess more pleasing complexions and more regular features. Indeed, some are almost rosy-faced; while the neatness of their coiffure is a delight to behold, for their luxuriant black tresses, glossy with a liberal application of coco-nut oil, are done up into a tight coil on the top of the head, and rarely is this without some bright flower stuck coquettishly into one side. Their costume does not differ very materially from that of the men, since a similar smart little white jacket surmounts the gay-coloured *lungyi* wrapped about the waist. By a decree of the late King Thebaw, however, this nether garment had to be left open at one side, and thus, when walking, maidens exposed their legs to the thigh.

Thrown tastily around the neck, or across the shoulders, is usually to be seen some bright-coloured silk scarf; and with sandals on her feet, and a paper-covered bamboo umbrella shielding her fair face from sunburn, merry Miss Burma looks a truly charming little lady, notwithstanding the colossal white cheroot that she places so frequently to her laughing lips. It is the ladies, too, that possess the bulk of the brains and "go" of the race; and the men seem generally content to leave their business and financial affairs to be managed by their wives and female relatives.

I reached Mandalay at a gay time, for the Race Week was in full swing, and visitors had assembled from different parts of Upper Burma to join in the festivities; while the race-course was always thronged with brightly dressed Burmans of both sexes, who dearly love to have a bit on each race at the totalisator. I was allotted

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quarters by my Executive Engineer, Captain Appleton, R.E., in a teak-wood block of buildings for officers near the combined R.A. and R.E. mess, of which I was made an honorary member, and there met several old friends.

The garrison was commanded by Major-General Sir George Wolseley, a younger brother of Sir Garnet; and he seemed to regard the fame of his illustrious brother more in the nature of a handicap, than otherwise, with respect to his own career. Still, he was very kind to me, and since he lived *en garçon* with a certain Archdeacon Noyes was good enough to invite me to dinner twice during my short stay at Mandalay.

Most of the troops were accommodated within the extensive walled and moat-surrounded enclosure known as Fort Dufferin; and which a few years previously had been the residence of King Thebaw and his terrible Queen, Soopyalat. Many beautifully carved buildings in teak adorned the precincts of the fort, whilst the ornately decorated and richly embellished palace of the king, and its charming grounds, were transformed into the Officers' Club, where dances, dinners and other harmless gaieties now replaced the splendour, cruelty and debauchery of former times.

The town of Mandalay itself lies outside the fort walls; and from the summit of Mandalay Hill, a short distance in the opposite direction, a fine view of fort and city spread before one when looking towards the Irrawaddy. Thousands of pagodas raised their picturesque heads above the plains over, seemingly, an area of many miles; while the most important of all, the great white "Incomparable Pagoda" stood out superbly from the cluster of lesser ones about the foot of the hill.

The conditions in the Military Works at Mandalay were in some ways different from the usual order of

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things in India, and I found there was much to learn; for bricks and mortar were here very largely replaced by structures built almost entirely of teak, as Burma boasts many magnificent forests of this durable timber. Appleton was an expert instructor, however, in the art; but after long office hours I was always glad of some racquets with him, to remove the cobwebs from my brain. We spent delightful days, too, shooting snipe, at which he was a "nailer," and which abounded in the paddy fields close at hand, to an extent never before seen by me. Nevertheless, when at the end of a month I received a cable asking if I was willing to go out to British East Africa, to assist Macdonald in a preliminary survey for the Uganda Railway, I jumped at the offer.

On October 28th, 1891, I left Mandalay, and after a calm passage to Calcutta, travelled post-haste to Bombay, where I met Twining on November 9th. He had recruited some forty of our former Pathan *khalassies* in the Punjab for the expedition, and we sailed on the 10th for Aden, where we were to be joined by Macdonald and Pringle. They were on their way out from England, with the bulk of the equipment required for this fresh railway venture in lands still more uncivilized than those in which we had worked together on the North-West Frontier of India.

At some future date, I may perhaps attempt to relate certain adventures during four expeditions in the Dark Continent between the years 1891 and 1901. For the present, however, I propose to confine myself chiefly to experiences in our great Indian dependency, where by far the larger number of years of my service was spent, up to the time of the European War. It must suffice to say here, therefore, that the survey under Macdonald's direction definitely proved that a serviceable railway could be constructed between the coast and Uganda at no prohibitive cost. In order to establish

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this fact, the expedition was usually divided into two parties, examining different routes, whereby in nine months 4,280 miles were marched, and 2,724 miles of routes surveyed, to decide the location of a railway estimated in the field as 657 miles in length. This was then a record as a reconnaissance for a railway in savage regions, and has probably never been surpassed for rapidity and accuracy since.

On the completion of the survey, Pringle, Twining and I returned to England in November, 1892, spending a few days at Naples and Rome while travelling across the Continent. Macdonald, unfortunately, had been forced to remain behind in East Africa; for when the expedition reached Kibwezi, 200 miles only from Mombasa, on its coastwards journey, our chief received orders from the Foreign Office to return the 600 miles to Uganda, and there investigate certain dissensions that had arisen between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Missions in that country.

Plans, estimates and report for the proposed Uganda Railway were prepared by the rest of us at the War Office in London between November, 1892, and April, 1893, when we were all granted several months' special leave before returning to India. Twining was proceeding to his home in Canada, for ten years had elapsed since he last saw his parents; and he invited me to accompany him for a portion of my leave, it being our intention to pay a visit also to the World's Fair at Chicago.

The spring of 1893 in England had been as warm as a normal summer when Twining, his young sister and I sailed from Liverpool for New York in the *Alaska*, a former "Greyhound of the Atlantic"; but towards the end of April the temperature in mid-ocean dropped so low that, on reaching New York, we were scarcely surprised to find snow still lying in parts of Staten

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Island. Here we were most hospitably entertained in the house of Twining's eldest brother, who had become a naturalized American, having for some years past been in business in New York. His wife, as charming as himself, was the sister of Lieutenant Stairs, R.E., who had so greatly distinguished himself with Stanley in Darkest Africa, but later lost his life in that continent when in command of an important expedition despatched to Katanga.

Soon after our arrival, Twining crossed by ferry one evening to dine with friends in New York, and returned in a torrent of rain that had soaked him to the skin. Next morning he was down with double pneumonia, and rapidly became so seriously ill that his life was almost despaired of. So grave grew his condition that his parents were telegraphed for, and travelled with all speed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to be at his side.

By the time they arrived Twining had, happily, taken a turn for the better, and when he was considered out of danger it was decided that I should go off to Chicago with his youngest brother, spend ten days at the World's Fair, and return to New York to take Geoff to his home at Halifax. It was hoped that in the course of the next fortnight he would be able to travel without risk; so we departed by the Pennsylvania Railway, the journey of close on 1,000 miles being comfortably accomplished in about twenty-four hours.

At Chicago, needless to say, I was fascinated by all I saw of the Fair, the site for which, on the shore of Lake Michigan, could scarcely have been bettered elsewhere in America. It seemed a pity, however, to leave Chicago without visiting the great stock-yard and meat industry for which the town is noted; so I wrote to Mr. Armour, the head of the largest concern of the kind in the continent, saying I had seen most of the sights in Chicago, and been thoroughly over the World's Fair

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Exhibition, but I was anxious to learn something about his huge business, for I understood that it was no less wonderful in its way. Though a mere subaltern, I received a most friendly reply, and Mr. Armour even went so far as to send a carriage and pair to the Virginia Hotel to convey me after breakfast one morning to his stock-yards; whilst one of his sons courteously conducted me on arrival over much of the gigantic establishment for several hours.

Six days in the week, 3,500 pigs, 5,000 sheep and 1,500 steer were then being daily slaughtered, skinned, cleaned out, dismembered, and otherwise disposed of, and we witnessed the procedure from A to Z as we followed down the line of overhead trollies from which the carcasses were slung. These trundled past rows of men, each of whom performed some particular operation on the body as it came abreast of him, before it continued to the next man for further treatment; and so on, right down the line. It was an astonishing display of skilful organization and efficiency in dealing with the mountains of meat that required to be carved up within a few hours. In fact, such was the dispatch with which the series of operations was carried out that only a few minutes elapsed from the time a pig was stuck, immersed in a hot tank to soften his bristles, and these entirely removed from his hide by flappers in an ingenious machine through which any sized hog could travel, to emerge as bald as a coot on the far side. The subsequent dismemberment of the carcass was even more expeditious; and when the head alone reached the end of the trolly trip there seemed some truth in the assertion that a genuine look of wonderment remains on the face of the pig as to what had become of the rest of himself, since he entered the pen leading to his slaughterer.

From Chicago I proceeded to the Canadian side of Niagara, where I spent several days. Like many others,

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I was disappointed by my first view of the world-famous Falls, as seen from the train while traversing the great suspension bridge spanning the chasm; for so wide is the expanse of this mighty cascade that its height of 154 feet seemed comparatively dwarfed. But this feeling soon faded away when we had clambered about the islands and beautiful banks close to the margin of the ledge over which this ceaseless avalanche of water poured; and again when one entered the Whirlwind Caves to gaze on the liquid wall and curtain-like spray, that roared past and drenched one as though threatening to engulf this seemingly precarious coign of vantage. Steaming about in the placid basin at the foot of the falls, in the little *Maid of the Mist*, and looking upwards, finally banished any lingering doubts as to whether Niagara was an overrated wonder of Nature, or not.

I next travelled to Toronto, to find Queen Victoria's Birthday being observed as a general holiday with much local rejoicing; and witnessed a magnificent game of lacrosse, as played by real experts in this Canadian national pastime. This was my turning-point for the present and I returned to New York, via Buffalo, through which town the train clanged its way in the dark, apparently down several of its main streets; for men, women, children and vehicles seemed to swarm in the lighted thoroughfares on each side of the unfenced railway, in what appeared a most dangerous manner.

On arrival at Staten Island I was pained to learn that Twining's lung had not yet healed; and that to avoid risk of consumption setting in he had been ordered to convalesce in the dry, invigorating climate of the Adirondacks. Thus I set forth for Halifax alone; and more than six years passed before Twining returned to India as, when recovered, he received an appointment on the staff of the R.M.C. at Kingston. This he held for five years before we met again in England in the summer of 1899.

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New York was in the throes of one of its periodical, and extremely unpleasant, heat waves when I departed north for Montreal, where I found normal summer conditions prevailing in this beautifully situated city overlooking the St. Lawrence River. During my short stay I naturally ascended Mountain Park, the high ground behind the town, which commanded a glorious view of the Lachine Rapids, and fifty miles up and down this majestic waterway, as well as a bird's-eye impression of the prosperous-looking town spread out 800 feet beneath one.

Proceeding down the St. Lawrence, my next halting-place was the rock-bound citadel of Quebec, where I remained as the guest of my father's eldest brother and his family for several days. Two of my cousins were still living at home with their parents, and the young people conducted me over all the best-known beauty spots in the neighbourhood, as well as stately buildings and scenes of historical renown close by, such as the Parliament House, Frontenac Hotel, and the Heights of Abraham, where the immortal Wolfe and Montcalm both fell on the decisive battle-field which brought Canada into the comity of British nations across the seas. The French-Canadian element seemed, at the time of my visit, to be almost entirely centred in and about the Province of Quebec, for French was widely spoken hereabouts; whereas I seldom heard that language employed either at Montreal or Toronto.

My uncle, though more than twenty years older than my father, and then 78, was still an ardent sportsman, shooting being a pastime in which he had indulged from early boyhood. In those good old days, snipe, duck and other wild-fowl abounded in the marshes around Quebec, and his ancient game-books recorded bags that made my mouth water. Under existing conditions their numbers had largely decreased; but the veteran

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continued to enjoy occasional days with his gun at the proper season. He was surprisingly conservative in his views on the subject, though, and would have no truck with the modern double-barrelled breech-loader, maintaining that there was nothing to equal his trusty muzzle-loader, with which he had taken heavy toll of game-birds in the past.

As the time at my disposal was drawing to a close I travelled straight to Halifax, where Twining's parents kindly entertained me throughout my stay. The place boasted the reputation of being the most sought-after overseas' garrison on the British roster; and this I readily understood during my brief sojourn there, for so hospitable were the residents, and so attractive the life and surroundings of Halifax, at all seasons of the year, that one could scarcely conceive a pleasanter home from home than this delightful Nova Scotian station. One of my younger brothers was a subaltern in the 8th King's Regiment, which had arrived from Bermuda a year or two before, and as he had obtained leave home, we arranged to sail for England together.

Being midsummer, and the river entirely ice-free, Atlantic liners now proceeded up the St. Lawrence as far as Montreal; but as we had no wish to travel by train so far west in order to embark, we decided to catch the steamer at Rimouski. There we arrived the afternoon before the steamer was expected, so had leisure to explore this quaint, countrified, and rather French-looking little town. No harbour, to speak of, existed, and steamers merely anchored for a brief spell well out in the stream—here about 25 miles wide—to take passengers and cargo aboard. Thus, when our liner hove in sight next day, we and our belongings were conveyed out to her in a launch, and she continued her voyage direct to Moville, in the north of Ireland, near the mouth of Lough Foyle.

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Although well into the summer, progress through the Gulf of St. Lawrence was still a matter of delicate navigation, owing to the banks of fog encountered, and the presence of huge icebergs, several of which were passed at fairly close quarters. But once in the open Atlantic, full steam ahead was the order of the day. During the last stage to Liverpool we must have narrowly missed shipwreck in a thick fog off the north end of the Isle of Man. Looking out of my cabin window, when we were going dead slow in the early morning of reaching our destination, I was amazed suddenly to see great rocks emerge from out of the mist, and so close beside the ship that it seemed as if I could toss a biscuit on to them through the porthole. I was quickly on deck, but the danger passed, and that afternoon saw us all safely ashore in the Liverpool docks.

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CHAPTER XIII

LUCKNOW AND SIMLA

Bound for Bombay, I left England early in August, 1893, to catch the P. & O. S.S. *Oriental* at Brindisi on the 6th, and landed again in India about a fortnight later. On arrival I found myself posted to the Military Works Department at Lucknow, my new chief being Colonel Henry, R.E., who subsequently became Q.M.G. in India, and had recently commanded the Madras Sappers and Miners at Bangalore, where he and his wife knew my parents. The two other R.E. subalterns in the Military Works were my old messmate of Chatham days, Watkins, with whom I now shared a bungalow, and E. D. Swinton, who later gained literary fame as "Old Luk-oie," and then as one of the originators of the Tank in warfare, and now occupies the chair of the Chichele Professor of Military History at Oxford, as Major-General Sir Ernest Swinton.

When a youngster at Lucknow, Ernest was blessed with a vivid imagination, and used to amuse Watkins and I greatly by his novel ideas for patenting certain ingenious, but simple, creations of his brain. These were designed to cost little, and to sell like hot cakes, thus enabling him to marry soon on the proceeds, for he was engaged to a cousin at home. These short cuts to fortune did not, alas, materialize during our brief and cheery association at Lucknow, though Swinton's well-merited pecuniary reward for his share in the introduction of the Tank pleased me mightily.

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Watkins and I messed with the officers of the East Lancashire Regiment, who were good enough to make us honorary members and really treated us almost as one of themselves, for they were an extremely hospitable, amusing and sporting band of brothers. The long-drawn-out hot weather of the United Provinces was still in full swing when I arrived, and prickly heat irritated one's skin in a way that I had not experienced before in the drier atmosphere of the Punjab; but ere long thoughts of the coming cold weather brought solace to our trials, and soon we commenced a strenuous course of training for the Regatta to be held on the Goomtee early in November. For this, we three and Lieutenant (now Brig.-General Sir Valentine) Murray, then in civil employ, comprised the R.E. crew. Although we were beaten in the final of the Regimental Fours, Murray and I managed to pull off the Pairs for the Sappers, which was some balm in Gilead, seeing the size of the garrison, and the few R.E.'s available to draw on.

The Lucknow Regatta usually ushered in the cold weather round of gaieties at that station; and these continued with unbroken zest into April, when the approach of the hot weather drove the majority of the ladies to the hills, and permitted a goodly number of lucky officers to get away on leave to England and elsewhere. Lucknow was almost unrivalled for sport of every description, since on the splendid race-course some of the most important race meetings then held anywhere in India took place, such as the Army Cup and Civil Service Cup—the latter regarded as the Blue Riband pony event of the whole peninsula. Thus I saw Major (now General Sir Horace) Smith-Dorrien, the D.A.A.G. at Lucknow, win the Army Cup with his grey pony "Shannon" in 1894, I think it was; whilst his friend Captain Apthorpe, of the 18th

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Royal Irish, with whom he then lived, won it in the 1893 Meeting with "Garryowen," if I remember aright.

Lucknow was also the venue that cold weather of the Infantry Polo Tournament, when some magnificent play was witnessed, the all-conquering Durham Light Infantry team, under de Lisle, retaining the trophy they had captured several years back. They lived in the XXXth Mess during the week of the tournament, so I met again C. C. Luard of the famous team, who had been at Clifton with me. Two other O.C. brothers were also staying in the mess, R. C. of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, and E. B. of the Shropshire Light Infantry, so it proved a regular family gathering of Luards.

Besides polo, admirable facilities existed for cricket, racquets and tennis in the Mahommed Bagh Recreation Club, within cantonment limits; but the counter-attractions of duck and snipe-shooting in the neighbourhood on Thursdays usually made it no easy matter to get up cricket, a task entrusted to me, as at Peshawur four years earlier. Still, we managed to raise fairly representative teams to play Bareilly, Cawnpore and other stations away from home, so the game did not entirely languish under my direction; while these outings were always much enjoyed by those taking part in them, as they gave one an opportunity to see places of historical interest, when not actually engaged in play.

My sojourn in Lucknow was varied, in January, 1894, by three instructive weeks spent at the Pur Camp Siege Operations, near Rurki. Sunday being a *dies non* in camp, my friend Travers of Peshawur days and I several times rode out to the extensive Kadir *jheel*, close by, on the Saturday afternoon, pitched a tent on its margin for the night, and enjoyed some excellent duck-shooting, for which the Kadir is noted. As he kept a

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canoe for this purpose, we had one thrilling evening's sport concealed among the rushes when the ducks were flighting by full moon; but the subsequent picking-up of the birds that had fallen to our guns was no easy business in the pale light, owing to the floating vegetation that encumbered the surface of the swamp.

On another occasion Travers narrowly escaped a tragic end while we were paddling his canoe amid the rushes by day, stalking some ducks settled on an open patch of water. I was seated in front, working like a nigger, when I was startled by the roar of his great duck-gun just behind; and turning round to ascertain the cause noticed that my companion had gone as white as a sheet. He then explained that he had stopped paddling for a moment to shift the position of the duck-gun, and the evil thing went off in his hands as he was about to put it down again, the prodigious charge missing his head by inches! So violent was the recoil that the gun had leapt out of his hands and was now reposing at the bottom of the Kadir. Fortunately the water was only 3 or 4 feet deep at the spot, so we eventually fished the fearsome weapon up again; but we contented ourselves with ordinary shot-guns for the remainder of the day's sport.

Having reconciled myself to spending the hot weather in Lucknow, I was agreeably surprised to receive orders in May, when already unpleasantly warm, to proceed to Simla forthwith. On arrival at this summer Seat of the Mighty, I learned that I was to officiate as an Assistant Secretary in the Military Department of the Government of India, in the place of Captain James Dallas, R.E., who had been deputed to act as Secretary to the Lyall Committee, then about to sit.

This Committee had been called to consider every aspect of R.E. Services in India; and to propose measures

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making them more attractive, if possible. For it had been found that many young R.E. officers, after completing their tour of five years in the country, during which they had usually gained considerable experience, preferred to revert to the Home Establishment, as future prospects in India did not encourage them to extend their services under that Government. Just at the time, therefore, that young R.E.'s were becoming really useful to India, they frequently shook the dust of the country off their feet; and their places had to be filled by inexperienced youngsters from Chatham, whereby, of course, India was the loser. The aim of the Committee, then, was to attract young Sappers to remain on after their five years' tour, and to elect for more or less permanent service in India, by offering them certain inducements to do so.

Without pursuing the matter further, it will suffice to say that, as a result of the mass of oral opinions and written evidence, collected from all ranks of R.E.'s scattered throughout India, the deliberations of the Lyall Committee that summer and autumn evolved much improved conditions of pay and pension, for such R.E.'s as elected to put in at least twenty years of their service in our great Dependency.

The fresh duties I was now called upon to undertake at Simla were unlike anything carried out by me before, and gave me an insight into the working of the Government of India—a sealed book to me until then. It afforded me an opportunity, too, of meeting, or seeing something of, the leading lights in India, from the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, and Commander-in-Chief, Sir George White, downwards to lesser constellations and mere Assistant Secretaries and Attachés; and playing my small part also in the social life of this gay and hospitable Himalayan resort of gifted beings, and beautiful, accomplished ladies.

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Among the subaltern Attachés in the Intelligence Department residing at the United Service Club, where I settled down for the season, was one Robertson. After a number of years spent in the ranks, he had gained his commission in the 3rd Dragoon Guards; and beside him I sometimes found myself seated at table. Though striking most members of the Club as a man of few words, and blunt and downright in his mode of speech, one soon felt that his somewhat rough exterior covered a dour, determined Scot spirit, in no wise daunted by such difficulties as seemed to lie in his path towards the attainment of success in his profession. Despite the lack of education he had received in his hard youth, his remarkable diligence and thoroughness were acknowledged by all under whom he worked. Robertson's career onwards has been meteoric, as is well known, and I have followed it with the deepest interest since those distant Simla days. Never before has a British soldier risen from "Private to Field-Marshal," and entirely by his own industry and ability; while the lady destined to be the partner of his fortunes I then knew well, for she was the sister of my old friend "Chris" Birdwood's wife, and they were all living in a small bungalow close to the Club, so I used to see much of them.

At this time also, a smart, slim subaltern of the Grenadier Guards, Ponsonby, was one of the Viceroy's A.D.C.'s, and Simla Society owed this youth much for the enjoyment he brought into their lives as a born actor, who frequently shared the triumphs of the Simla Amateur Dramatic Society. The talent then displayed by these amateurs was probably not to be equalled elsewhere in the Empire, by any body of actors whose profession was not the stage. I had but lately seen "Diplomacy" several times in London, when the Bancrofts and Hare returned to the boards to make their final bow to the

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public, so was prepared to be highly critical when Simla put the play on that summer. But the acting was magnificent and, frankly, I enjoyed the Simla performance every whit as much as that of the acknowledged leading actors in London. Mrs. Wheeler was the lady Simla star of the season, and she and young Ponsonby on the stage together were a sheer delight—particularly in a wildly farcical burlesque, when the fame of Nellie Farren and Fred Leslie were in danger of eclipse by the extremely funny and polished performance of our two leading Simla amateurs. The light-hearted A.D.C. of those days is now the Right Hon. Sir Frederick Ponsonby, Treasurer to the King, Keeper of the Privy Purse, and much besides.

Early in November news reached us in Simla that the Mahsud Waziris had made an unwarranted attack on a Delimitation Mission escort camped at Wana, on the western confines of the country, in the small hours of the 3rd. This escort, numbering some 3,000 combatants of all arms, had been despatched as a covering force to the Mission detailed to demarcate the new boundary between India and Afghanistan, lately settled by Sir Mortimer Durand with the Amir at Kabul. The Mahsuds had been informed by the Government of India of its intentions; and assurances were given them that their internal affairs would in no way be interfered with during the work of the Boundary Commission; and their friendly co-operation in the task was sought.

Our information was at first fragmentary, and beyond the fact that hordes of fanatics had penetrated the camp defences at Wana, and inflicted severe losses on the troops, including certain officers killed and wounded, we were kept in doubt for some time as regards details. It then gradually came out that a pestilent priest, Mullah Powindah by name, had persuaded the Mahsuds that their

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ancient independence was menaced by the assembly of the British force on the outskirts of their territory. He succeeded in collecting together a *lashkar* of some 3,000 fighting men who, under the cover of darkness, crept along various deep nullahs, by which the camp out in the open plain was surrounded, and thence launched a surprise attack at 5.30 a.m.

So sudden was the onset that outlying picquets were overwhelmed in the first rush of the tribesmen; and many Mahsud swordsmen managed to penetrate the perimeter defences and create havoc in the interior of the camp. They were with much difficulty expelled at the point of the bayonet, but not before they had killed and wounded 120 officers and men, besides destroying more than 100 transport animals. They had got clear away also with a number of rifles, some horses, and 3,000 rupees in cash; though it was estimated that the Mahsuds themselves lost 350 killed during the attack, and subsequent pursuit by cavalry at daylight.

For this unprovoked outrage, the Mahsuds were called upon to surrender nineteen of their leaders as hostages for their future good behaviour, to drive Mullah Powindah out of the country until the demarcation of the boundary was completed, and to restore all the stolen property within a certain time. Failing compliance with these terms, the tribesmen were warned that punitive action would be taken to enforce them.

Whilst matters remained thus, I was transferred to the Military Works at Calcutta, where I took up my residence in Fort William with Captain John Tanner, R.E., my new chief. Within a week of my arrival, however, it had become apparent to the Government of India that the Mahsuds had no serious intention of carrying out the demands made; and so the Waziristan Field Force was at length organized, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir William Lockhart. It con-

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sisted of three mixed brigades of all arms, directed to assemble at Wana, Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu, respectively, in order to invade Mahsud country simultaneously from three widely separated quarters.

To my delight I now received orders to proceed at once to Dera Ismail Khan and join the 5th Company Bengal Sappers and Miners, so left Calcutta on December 1st, 1894, for Lucknow, where I picked up my camp kit and pushed on to my destination. But from Lala Musa onwards progress was desperately slow, the train crawling the next 200 odd miles, and it was 9.30 p.m., therefore, when we reached the bank of the Indus at Darya Khan on the 5th. The river bed was here about 7 miles across, and though in the hot weather one huge sheet of water, it was now split up into several ill-defined channels, all bridged by boats, with wide areas of sand between. Since Dera Ismail Khan was some 8 miles beyond the far bank of the river, I had to charter a tonga and ekka to convey me, my servant and our belongings to that cantonment; and after a cold, eerie drive by moonlight we eventually reached the Sapper Company camp at 1.30 a.m. Then, on arrival, I had the mortification to find that my gun and case had been stolen out of the tonga, probably at some changing stage en route, whilst I was stamping about trying to keep warm; and the local police failed to recover it for me.

Our camp was near the fort, some 2 miles outside cantonments; and of the other three subalterns in the Company, Travers was in command, H. R. Stockley, an old friend of Shop and Chatham days, while S. H. Sheppard, a noted racquet player, and now a Major-General, completed the quartette. A very happy family it proved throughout our association in the field, and during the thirty odd years of our friendship since.

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The mixed brigade of which the 5th Co. B.S. & M. formed a part was under the command of Brig.-General Penn Symons—afterwards killed at Talana in the South African War—and consisted of four battalions of Indian Infantry, a Mountain Battery, a squadron of Punjab Cavalry and ourselves, with the usual Medical, Supply and Transport, and other complements. We moved out of Dera Ismail Khan on December 8th, and reached the large fortified post and bazaar at Tank, 40 miles distant and near the foot of the bleak Waziri hills, on the 10th. Another 8 miles next day carried us well into the foot-hills, through which we continued up the broad stony bed of the Takki Zam for some 10 or 11 miles before gaining the Jandola post on the 12th.

Here the force was joined by Sir William Lockhart, and remained stationary for several days, pending the final decision of the Government of India as regards its further advance into Mahsud territory. During this halt a group of us youngsters had it from the lips of Sir William, himself, that he had received a letter from Mullah Powindah, signed by his own seal, in which the jocular priest asked the General to give him one day's notice of any intended move from Jandola towards Makin; and promising him a good fight by day somewhere en route, if he did so!

On December 16th the eagerly awaited decision of the Government arrived, in the form of a proclamation by the Viceroy, stating that the Government had done everything in its power to bring about a peaceful settlement with the Waziris concerning the Boundary Delimitation; but as the Waziris refused to come to terms, it was now considered necessary to send an expedition into their country; and there it would remain until the survey and demarcation of the frontier with Afghanistan had been completed.

The die now being definitely cast, active steps were

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at once taken for the forward move of the brigade into the heart of Waziristan; but before narrating our experiences during the course of the operations, it may be helpful if some description of the country and its inhabitants is first given.

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CHAPTER XIV

A WINTER IN WAZIRISTAN

Waziristan is situated along the western frontier of the Indian Empire, and has an average length of 110 miles from north to south, with a breadth of 60 miles. The country is extremely mountainous in character, being intersected in all directions, as previously stated, by rugged ridges and ravines radiating from lofty ranges and peaks, which attain an altitude of 11,000 feet above sea level. The Mahsud area is a particularly barren one, and practically unproductive save for small patches of cultivation on *kaches*, or flat terraced plots of alluvial soil, generally at the base of the mountains and near the mouths of the principal defiles. Consequently, the struggle for existence by its inhabitants is severe; and to their lack of natural resources may probably be attributed the Ishmaelite outlook of the tribe. Their notorious plundering proclivities have certainly served to raise a race of fine physique and independent bearing; while their women and children, too, possess the power to endure fatigue and hardships, under adverse climatic conditions, to a very remarkable degree.

Until the systematic construction of strategic roads, during the last few years of occupation by our troops in India, water-courses and stony river beds were the normal means of communication within this difficult region. Hence invading forces were necessarily restricted in their advance on Mahsud strongholds to these primitive paths, crossing and re-crossing at frequent

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intervals the usually shallow streams that carve their tortuous way through impressive defiles, amid a labyrinth of hills, before uniting to form two or three rivers of some volume which finally emerge on to the plains of India.

Along the beds of such mountain torrents—so vulnerable to attack by a brave and warlike foe holding the steep, and often precipitous, heights on either side—columns of all arms had to march on a narrow front, their long line of transport animals trailing out far behind. Hence it was essential to clear these heights as the columns advanced; and to crown them with picquets, which had to maintain their positions against possible assaults until the last of the baggage animals had passed safely through each successive danger point in the seemingly interminable defiles of this forbidding country. The mobile, hawk-eyed enemy, on the other hand, being tied to no line of communication, and intimately acquainted with the wild topography of his homeland, was thus free to assemble at some rocky gateway of great natural strength to bar the progress of the invader. Thence it was usually easy for him to melt away into the adjacent ravines and broken ground, when his powers of resistance were overcome, or his line of retreat threatened.

It will be readily understood, therefore, how difficult, if not impossible, it is to inflict a crushing blow in actual fight on so agile and elusive a foe as the Mahsud. Yet they have seldom been able to withstand for long the steady converging advance of well-trained troops towards the heart of their country. After suffering comparatively few casualties in *personnel* whilst attempting to oppose such advances, they generally submit, for a time, when they see their villages destroyed, their tall defensible towers blown up, and their scanty crops utilized for feeding the animals of British columns.

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War being war, their women and children, and their flocks and herds, would be forced to flee meanwhile to remote asylums in the loftier ranges—fastnesses where great privations must be endured, owing to their snow-bound character during the rigours of winter.

The strength of the Mahsuds, in 1894, was estimated at from 10,000 to 12,000 fighting men. Of breech-loading rifles they probably did not possess more than 300, chiefly stolen from British territory by expert rifle-thieves. The bulk of their firearms consisted of the *jezail*, the flint-lock muzzle-loader, and flint-lock pistols. The old *jezail* was a fearful and wonderful weapon, provided with prongs near the end of its barrel to steady the musket, when resting it on the ground or a rock to fire from a prone or crouching position. The range of this mediaeval firearm did not exceed a few hundred yards; and the sword was then regarded as the chief weapon of the Mahsud. Brave and dashing, they courted hand-to-hand fighting with sword and dagger, in the use of which they were highly skilled; and on several occasions in the past they had unhesitatingly charged down, sword in hand, on disciplined troops armed with breech-loading rifles and bayonets—as at Wana. During the last three decades, however, the Mahsuds have acquired many breech-loading and magazine rifles of precision, by raids, ambuscades, thefts, and purchase from the Persian Gulf; so the sword no longer plays the prominent part in their tactics that it formerly did.

But to resume my story. A cavalry reconnaissance made up the Takki Zam from Jandola for a distance of 7 or 8 miles, on December 17th, was fired on; so when the brigade commenced its advance next morning, carrying fifteen days' supplies on a long train of 1,500 camels, it was anticipated that the Mullah might prove as good as his word. Nevertheless, the Mahsuds gave

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the column a wide berth, and in no way interfered with the picqueting of the heights on either side of the narrowing valley as the force marched to Murghaband, the point reached by the reconnaissance. While a defensible camp was being pitched on a plot of rough ground little above the bed of the stream, the Sappers sallied forth on their first mission of destruction—the demolition of a tower perched on the heights overlooking the valley, and about a mile beyond the camp.

The tower was 16 or 17 feet square at the base, and solidly constructed with stone, timber and earth for about 10 feet above ground level. From this foundation two stories rose aloft, built of sun-dried bricks, beams and mud, and furnished with loopholes all around. The height of the structure from ground to roof was perhaps 40 feet; but far more imposing towers were met with later, particularly in the vicinity of Makin, where they frequently exceeded 50 feet in height, and were not less than 20 feet square at the base.

Still, this served very well as a beginning, and we were accompanied by a signaller, for the two Generals in camp wished to witness the first act of punishment inflicted on the Mahsuds. Burrowing 6 feet into one side of the solid base with picks and crowbars, 60 lb. of gunpowder were stowed snugly away at the end of the cavity, fuses fixed, and the bags of explosives well tamped. The mine laid, the Generals were informed by signal, and the answer, "Go ahead," received. The fuses lit, we retired to a respectful distance; and presently a loud boom resounded far and wide, while the whole edifice appeared to be bodily lifted. It remained poised in the air, and seemingly intact, for one thrilling instant, and then gracefully collapsed with a thunderous crash into a shapeless mass on its original site. When the dense cloud of dust subsided, much timber was extracted from the débris. This was quickly loaded on to mules

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and conveyed to camp, where it made a welcome addition to the fuel supply of the force.

The Mahsuds were evidently not best pleased at this desecration of one of their defences; and during the hours of darkness vented their spleen by firing into camp from vantage points to which our picquets were not entirely able to deny them access. The advance next day was, however, unmolested, though 2 miles short of our new camping-ground at Surimanja Kach the hills closed in to form the Ahnai Tangi, a narrow defile barely 30 yards across, and hemmed in by nearly vertical cliffs. The river bed had necessarily to be followed throughout the march of 8 miles, and we thus had an opportunity of appreciating the labour expended by the Mahsuds on irrigating small plots of artificially levelled ground, their *kaches*. In order to derive crops from these alluvial patches, the river water was caught some distance up-stream and gradually conducted to them by means of channels built up against the side of the cliffs. In places these channels were driven through spurs of shale and rock, the tunnels being occasionally 30 to 40 feet long. Commodious caves, too, hewn into the face of the cliffs, were passed at intervals usually near cultivated ground, where additional shelter was apparently sought by the inhabitants when guarding ripening crops from birds and other animals.

Sniped as usual during the night, 2 miles next morning brought us face to face with the famous Barari Tangi. This prodigious portal to the heart of Mahsud territory had been the scene of a stiff engagement when General Chamberlain invaded the country in 1860; and on leaving Jandola it was thought that Mullah Powindah would be most likely here to offer the stubborn resistance he had promised General Lockhart. But as we drew near, the commanding heights were found, to our

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surprise, to be completely deserted. The position was one of great natural strength, and admirably adapted to enable a weak force to bar the progress of a largely superior one; for the Takki Zam pierced its way by a narrow cleft through a chain of rugged mountains which crossed its course roughly at right angles. Yet Mullah Powindah and his vaunted hosts had made no attempt to barricade the entrance to this dangerous defile with rocks and trees, close at hand. Nor had stout breast-works of stone, *sangars*, been constructed on the upper slopes dominating the approach to this gloomy rift in the mountains.

The rear-guard, it is true, had been followed up and fired into, on leaving camp that morning; and during a later stage of the march a few Mahsuds rushed in among the camels from out of a branch ravine, and slashed several of those disdainful creatures with their tulwars before bolting for cover again. But these were minor annoyances compared with what they might have done had they decided to give battle at the Barari. Thus we passed safely through this gateway, and camped without further molestation some 7 miles beyond at Janjal, after blowing up two or three towers en route.

We were only 8 or 9 miles now from the populous centre of Makin, our immediate objective. Ten miles to the south of it lay Kaniguram, on which other important stronghold the Wana brigade was simultaneously advancing from the west; whilst from the east the Bannu brigade was steadily progressing through the hills to join hands with ours at Makin. The Mahsuds were thus threatened from three sides at the same time; and one can very well imagine that divided counsels were largely responsible for the lack of enterprise displayed at this juncture by our fanatical foe. Be that as it may, the opposition offered to the invading columns

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was almost negligible, and our north-westerly advance continued on Makin next day.

Some 3 or 4 miles above Janjal, the Takki Zam was joined, at Do Toi, by the stream which led up to Kaniguram in a south-westerly direction. About a mile and a half farther on we came upon Mullah Powindah's home, the village of Marobi, perched on a small plateau up the hill-sides overlooking the vale of the Takki Zam. Makin was but 5 miles distant; so while the main body of the force advanced on that place, the Sappers were ordered to level Marobi to the ground. This work it was supposed would be completed before the rear-guard, at the tail of the transport, reached the spot. The huts proved of such a substantial character, however, that the task occupied us several hours. The rear-guard, engaged in a running fight with the Mahsuds, who were following it up and firing into it from the opposite slopes, had not apparently been informed of our presence above at Marobi. It thus unwittingly passed along in the gorge below, leaving us and the small infantry escort attached to us in the air.

The Mahsuds were not slow to take advantage of our isolation; and as they reached the heights opposite they turned their attention from the rear-guard to the demolition party, on whom their fire was now directed. Soon the bullets began to fall around us whilst still busy at our work of destruction on the exposed plateau. Our assailants, on the other hand, were screened from view by the dwarf-oak and undergrowth with which the slopes on their side were clad. We were fortunate, therefore, to get off with the loss of one man, who was shot dead just after we had blown down the village tower as a grand finale. The poor fellow was speedily hoisted into a stretcher, the mules loaded up with the tools and explosives, and, seeking such cover as the open hill-side afforded, we marched off to overtake the rear-

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guard in the valley beneath. Though pursued by the fire of the Mahsuds for some distance, no further casualties resulted; and when the rear-guard was reached the withdrawal to the new camp at Makin was continued under its fostering care. The force was subjected to desultory sniping throughout the night, but little harm was done thereby.

The main village of Makin was situated on the lower spurs of Pir Ghal, whose snow-covered summit looked down from a height of over 11,000 feet above the sea on the relatively fertile fields far below. The huts and habitations, 200 to 300 in number, were distant about 1½ miles to the west of our camp; and several conspicuous towers stood out in an alluring manner from their midst. Elsewhere, other small villages and hamlets, each with its own tower, were dotted about the plateaux and hill-slopes of the valley; and as the area covered was considerable stately towers were visible on all sides. A comparatively large tract of country in the vicinity had been brought under cultivation, the ground being skilfully arranged in a succession of narrow terraces by means of rough stone walls, to the tops of which the earth in rear had been laboriously levelled. Though fuel and water proved plentiful, the villages were found to contain little in the shape of supplies; for the grain had either been carried away, or so cunningly buried that its hiding-places defied detection, and the livestock driven before the fugitives. Consequently, the country provided virtually nothing for the maintenance of the invading forces.

Thus, a convoy of 1,500 empty camels, escorted by an Indian battalion, was ordered back to Jandola next morning to bring up more supplies; and I was detailed to accompany it with a section of Sappers to demolish certain towers that had been provisionally spared during the advance on Makin. It was hoped to push through

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to Janjal the first march; but the convoy commander had been directed to await the arrival of a similar empty convoy from Kaniguram at Do Toi, the junction of the two streams previously mentioned. Although we were fired on almost continuously as far as Do Toi, Mahsud marksmanship was indifferent to-day, *jezails* apparently being the weapons chiefly employed against us; and their spherical bullets made more noise than accurate shooting.

The intended meeting-place was early reached, but not until 5.30 p.m. did the Kaniguram convoy come in sight, as it had been greatly delayed en route clearing the heights of snipers, and assisting the camels in some bad *tangis* and over steep passes. During our long wait at Do Toi we blew up a tower at leisure near by; and so late was it by the time the last of the Kaniguram camels arrived that it was decided all must camp for the night on the restricted spot we occupied. It worked out an unpleasantly tight fit for two battalions and 3,000 camels, as our indispensable grumbling beasts of burden were not exactly sweet-scented companions under such contiguous conditions.

The fine weather hitherto enjoyed now broke, and we were daily subjected to heavy falls of snow and sleet, which changed to rain as we descended into lower altitudes. All felt the cold intensely, in spite of the exercise of marching; for we became drenched by the elements above, and the constant wading backwards and forwards across the icy stream under-foot. It turned bright and sunny again, however, the day we reached Jandola, and here Christmas Day was spent; but it proved a very busy one. Thousands of sacks of flour and grain, and other supplies, had to be unstacked, and made up into camel loads; whilst the Sappers were hard at work constructing roadways down from the elevated plateau on which the post stood to the river bed below, in order to facilitate

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the descent of the 3,000 heavily laden camels when the return to Makin began.

At this juncture trouble arose with the hired Powindah camel-men, the majority of whom openly stated that they had had enough of it, and refused to accompany their camels back to Makin. This was rather serious; but fortunately there was a sprinkling of very good fellows among them, men who had spent some time in Australia with their camels, and during their sojourn in that land had picked up a smattering of English. As all the hired camel-men wore the usual Afghan garments, it was difficult to know which had travelled across the seas, and which had passed their lives bearing merchandise between Central Asia, Afghanistan and India. It was somewhat disconcerting, therefore, on addressing a brawny Ghilzai in one's most fluent Pushtu, to be answered by a cheery, "All right, boss," in a strong colonial accent. Still, it was chiefly due to the influence of these Commonwealth wanderers that all objections were ultimately adjusted, and we were able to start off on our return trip to Makin on December 27th. I will revert later to the Powindahs, who are normally warrior-traders that travel ceaselessly between Central Asia and India.

The Mahsuds in this area now displayed a disposition to be friendly. They even picqueted the heights for us, on their own initiative, and waved large pieces of cloth in their hands to indicate that all was correct—presumably in the hope that their remaining villages and towers might be spared. As we approached the Barari Tangi, one sportsman was seen in a prominent position on the ruins of a tower destroyed by General Chamberlain in 1860; and from this conspicuous spot he continued to signal us along until the entire convoy was safely through the dangerous defile. The lesson was evidently being taken to heart by the inhabitants athwart our line of communications.

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On our arrival at Makin we found both the Jandola and Bannu brigades camped on the plateau. During the past week several flying columns had scoured the country round, and many villages and towers had been demolished by the Sappers accompanying them. On one occasion 1,200 head of cattle and sheep had been captured, and formed a useful addition to the meat supply of the force. Little opposition had been met with on these *daurs*; but most of the Makin towers and defences still remained to be destroyed.

A day or two later, the Bannu brigade set forth for Jandola by a wide détour to ferret out haunts not yet visited by the Field Force. Shortly after their departure the Jandola brigade despatched a flying column of all arms from Makin, in the hope of surprising a group of villages in the Shuran Valley, to the north-west, which were reported to be occupied and to contain much cattle, grain and fodder. The Shuran enters the Takki Zam about 3 miles beyond Makin, and for the first mile or so above its junction the stony bed was dry. As we ascended, however, a tiny trickle appeared which gradually acquired the dignity of a stream. The valley narrowed rapidly, and soon became confined between high rocky crags. Snow was lying in many places, and 3 miles farther up the hill-sides were entirely covered; so when the village of Spin Kamar was reached, at an altitude of 7,600 feet, it was selected for the night's bivouac.

Notwithstanding previous reports, the whole valley was deserted, and the villages cleared of everything save grass and large quantities of pine-logs. One could not help suspecting, therefore, that the so-called "Friendlies," who clustered round the Political Officers in camp, were not above giving timely warning of intended raids to their fellow-tribesmen dwelling in the remoter regions of the mountains. They usually acted as guides to these

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secluded spots, so it requires no great stretch of imagination to suppose that, did they fail to send due notice to their brethren, their lives would not be worth a moment's purchase once the Field Force left the country. Clearly, then, the system obtaining at that time was far from sound; and a distinct bar, in the opinion of many, to the secret rapid movements of punitive columns.

The Mahsuds were at least unable to remove their villages and defences; so orders were issued to blow up four prominent towers in the vicinity of Spin Kamar. Whilst these were being prepared for demolition, I was directed to take a section of Sappers and destroy another large tower seen looming through the falling snow on a lofty ridge beyond. Before we gained it, a bend in the stream disclosed a second hamlet and tower. Leaving a few men to get this ready for mines also, I pushed on with the remainder and a small infantry escort to my original goal. A piercing wind blew and the cold was bitter; so, in spite of our exertions, we were chilled to the bone while climbing several hundred feet farther which landed us alongside the tower.

For some time past the use of gunpowder had been abandoned by us, owing to its bulk, and we now only employed gun-cotton or dynamite for demolition purposes; but so damp had some of our gun-cotton primers become that we experienced great difficulty in detonating the charges inserted in the base of this wind-swept tower. No less than three miss-fires occurred; and it is always a ticklish task in such circumstances to approach a tower in order to readjust matters. Sometimes action has been unaccountably delayed, and the mine may suddenly explode when least expected, with fatal results. The tower finally down, we were glad to descend from our exposed position, for the cutting wind, added to the densely swirling snow-flakes, had benumbed us as we toiled. Fortunately, the lower one was quite ready for

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demolition by the time we reached it, and went up gloriously first shot. With pleasing visions of bright pine-log bonfires before us, we hurried on to the friendly shelter of the bivouac; but when safely ensconced there the returning circulation of blood to feet and fingers caused excruciating pain.

Snow continued to fall steadily throughout the night. The entire column contrived, however, to tuck itself away in a marvellous manner into huts and sheds. Even the chargers and mules obtained shelter of a sort; and very welcome it must have been to these poor beasts, accustomed to the burning plains of India, for 6 or 7 inches of snow were lying on the ground by morning, and the sides of the stream frozen. Thus, the labour of reaching, and demolishing, several other towers in the neighbourhood was much increased. The higher slopes of the hills encompassing this vale were clothed in extensive forests of pine, while mistletoe and holly in profusion imparted a truly Christmas atmosphere to the scene. Nevertheless, there were few regrets when we commenced the return march to the more salubrious clime of Makin, where we arrived at dusk. Our total "bag" of towers in the brigade now amounted to fifty; and there yet remained those in the immediate vicinity of Makin, which were dealt with during the next two days.

Whilst camp was being pitched at Janjal, during the return march to Jandola, a most deplorable accident occurred, resulting in the death of young Lockhart, nephew and A.D.C. of the General. Hearing a report from the direction of Sir William's camp within the perimeter, several of us hurried thither to ascertain the cause of the explosion. To our dismay we saw Lockhart lying on the ground, supported by two of the General's staff, and bleeding profusely from a bullet wound which had penetrated heart and lungs. The case was a hope-

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less one, and the poor young fellow lived but a few moments. It was at first thought that some disgruntled trans-frontier sepoy in the camp had wilfully fired at Sir William, who was talking at the time to his nephew and his other A.D.C., the only son of Lord Roberts.

All troops in camp were immediately fallen in, and their rifles examined, while the General, placing his revolver under his arm, continued to pace up and down outside his tent, pending the result of the inspection. This revealed nothing; and it was only when the bullet had been extracted from Lockhart's lifeless form that it was found to be a revolver one. Subsequently it was proved that the Indian servant of one of the General's staff officers, while lifting the revolver off his master's table, had inadvertently pressed the trigger. The bullet passed through the side of the tent and found a fatal billet in Lockhart, who was standing just outside with his uncle and young Roberts.

Only a few hours before the two A.D.C.'s had remained behind with the Sappers at Makin to watch the two last towers being blown up, and then hurried on to rejoin the Chief. This untimely death of young Lockhart cast a gloom over the camp, for he was a very popular member of Sir William's staff. Preparations were at once made to have the body conveyed by forced marches to Dera Ismail Khan for burial in the cemetery there.

Owing to a recrudescence of Mahsud activity, the force halted for two days at Janjal in order to administer further punishment on this recalcitrant tribe. Neighbouring valleys were thoroughly scoured by flying columns, and additional towers and villages destroyed. The country traversed in these *daurs* was extraordinarily difficult, veritable cañons being entered through which mountain streams flowed between lofty rocky walls, sometimes 6 to 8 feet only apart. Often, too, sudden

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drops in the beds of the torrents occurred, creating obstacles which even the nimble-footed mules were unable to negotiate until smoothed away by the Sappers. The columns were at the same time hampered by snow and sleet, and rarely returned to the camp at Janjal before dark. Still, no concerted opposition was offered, the Mahsuds contenting themselves with taking occasional "pot-shots" at officers, several of whom had narrow shaves.

Thereafter, the brigade was left severely alone, and reached Jandola without incident on January 9th. Here the whole Waziristan Field Force was concentrated for the first time, the Wana and Bannu brigades having arrived some days before by routes to the east and west of ours. A large area of the Mahsud country had, therefore, been thoroughly explored; and an additional haul of 3,000 head of cattle made by the Bannu brigade some 12 miles to the north of Jandola. The Mahsuds had certainly been harassed, and close on ninety of their defensible towers, and various villages, had been destroyed by the two companies of Sappers; but they were not yet brought to their knees.

Mullah Powindah, well out of harm's way in Khost, had lately addressed a fiery proclamation to his followers, reviling them as "dogs" for permitting us *kafirs* (Unbelievers in the Prophet) to enter their country! He now summoned all Waziris to join in a *jehad* (Holy War) to drive the Infidels out again; and spoke bombastically of fighting three pitched battles against us. Further, he called on all trans-frontier Pathan sepoys in the ranks of the invaders to desert from the British.

Such being his attitude, and the demands of the Indian Government yet remaining to be complied with, arrangements were made at Jandola to penetrate still other portions of Mahsud territory.

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CHAPTER XV

MORE ABOUT WAZIRISTAN

Mullah Powindah's impassioned appeal met with little response, though an Afridi havildar and several sepoys had previously deserted from one regiment at Wana, a night or two after the Mahsud attack on the Delimitation Escort camp. These trans-frontier men had gone off with their Martinis and a goodly supply of ammunition, obtained chiefly by a clever ruse from the other sepoys on picquet duty. The havildar, a noted shot in the regiment, was now credited with being the Mullah's right hand, and the leader of the *budmashes* who had been firing continually on the different columns operating in the country. Active as he and his gang had certainly been, their efforts, unsupported by the Mahsuds as a whole, were not likely to lead to much.

The Wana brigade now received orders to return to Wana, via Tank and the Gomal river route; the Bannu brigade was directed to proceed across-country to Bannu, and thence up the Tochi Valley; whilst the Jandola brigade pushed west up the Shahur Zam to Kundiwam, in the Khaisera valley, some 13 miles to the north-east of the former Wana camp. At Kundiwam a large *jirgah* (council) was to be held by Sir William Lockhart about January 20th; and if the Mahsud *maliks* then displayed an inclination to accept the terms of Government, the delimitation of the new frontier with Afghanistan was to be taken in hand at once.

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The physical difficulties lying in the path of the Jandola brigade were known to be great; so both the 2nd and 5th Companies of Sappers were attached to it for the purpose of road-making. Accompanied by an escort of one Indian battalion, the Sappers left Jandola on January 11th for Haidari Kach, distant 8 miles up the Shahur; and during the next two days were busily employed in improving the rough track along the river bed for the passage of the main body and transport from Jandola. The Shahur joins the Takki Zam a short distance above the post, and almost immediately after entering it its cliffs commence to close in, and culminate in the Shahur Tangi, some 3 miles up-stream of the junction. The defile is narrow and shut in by lofty sandstone precipices; whilst rocks and boulders in the bed had to be blasted and regularized to render the route through practicable for camels in single file. In other places ramps had to be made from the river bed on to small *kaches* and then down again, in order to avoid particularly bad stretches in the river itself.

Thus the main body and transport were able to march comfortably through to our camp at Haidari Kach on the 13th; and next day the whole force proceeded together to Nana Khel Kot, another 11 miles on. We passed two tempting walled-in villages with towers, and several water-mills; but these, the Politicals said, belonged to "Friendlies." They were spared, although our field-telegraph line from Jandola had been cut twice at night during our three days' stay at Haidari Kach. Still, we had plenty to occupy us otherwise, for several plateaux had to be crossed to cut off sharp bends in the stream, which necessitated the rapid construction of roadways up to, and down from, these tracts of high land. On the whole, however, the going was fairly good, as the country hereabout opened out appreciably; so all the camels reached the new camping-ground by

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daylight—a welcome change to the normal state of things.

Continuing along the bed of the stream, the hills closed in again the following day; and though *kaches* existed at intervals, the river became much confined where joined by two other rocky ravines in the vicinity of some small hamlets and water-mills. Nevertheless the transport animals were got safely through this defile; but 8 miles after leaving Nana Khel Kot the force was confronted with an impassable *tangi*. We were compelled in consequence to clamber up to a plateau 150 feet above the river, in order to find a spot whereon the brigade could camp, Para Khel Kot by name.

The road to Kundiwam by the bed of the stream was effectually barred by an amazing cleft in the mountains. The hard limestone cliffs on each side rose for several hundred feet almost vertically out of the shingly bed of the river, and were separated by the space of only a few feet. In the 50 or 60 yards' length of this striking slit, the shallow stream flowed by a sinuous course; and near the centre of the gorge the cliffs closed in until they were less than 5 feet apart. Here an immense rock, of an irregular diamond shape, had fallen from the frowning heights above and was firmly jammed across the narrow aperture. Sufficient headway remained for a person to walk beneath, but no laden camel could hope to pass between those immovable walls.

The up- and down-stream approaches to the *tangi* were strewn with great boulders; and for another 2½ miles up-stream the bed of the Shahur remained largely a confused mass of more boulders and huge rocks, some almost as big as cottages. Thus, apart from that grim 60 yards of lower *tangi*, the construction of a camel track through that chaos of rocks and water leading to Kundiwam beyond, would obviously involve much

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labour and time. And of time there was little to spare, if the big *jirgah* was to come off on the date arranged.

Three R.E. parties set forth, therefore, to examine the country on ahead—along the right bank, the left bank, and the river route itself. The last, it was reported, would require a fortnight's work to render it practicable for laden camels; and it was ultimately decided that a track over the hills on the left bank, well inland from the river, promised the least heavy work of the three alternatives.

All next day the Sappers, assisted by infantry working-parties, toiled on the construction of a camel road over those bleak wind-swept hills; and by nightfall a necessarily winding, but good, 8-foot track curled its 3-mile length to Narai Raghza. This plateau was up-river of the Narai Tangi, the lower of the two defiles; so that had been circumvented, and a path made down to the stream, whence the water-supply of the force was drawn during its two days' halt there.

Whilst the road-making parties pushed on with the work ahead next day, the force moved up to Narai Raghza; but the remaining 4 miles of track to Kundiwam proved somewhat more difficult than the 3 already done. In many places the alignment along the hill-sides could not avoid rocky drops of 7 or 8 feet, which had to be ramped; big rocks elsewhere had frequently to be blasted away, for one had to consider the comfort of the laden camel, as he does not shine on hilly ground. And we had 1,700 of him to legislate for. Hence dry stone retaining walls are required here to carry the track; and there frozen rivulets crossed must be specially treated, to save our awkward beasts of burden from slipping on their glassy surface with their padded feet and, probably, spread-eagling themselves so badly as to necessitate their being shot. Nevertheless, by the end of the second day's work from Narai Raghza, an excellent

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track, nowhere exceeding a slope of 9°, was completed to Kundiwam.

The entire force marched to that place the following day without mishap, though the camels alone, stretched out in single file along this mountain track, would have occupied nearly two and a half times its length between Narai Raghza and Kundiwam. One felt a glow of satisfaction, therefore, when the last of the lot was safely settled in for the night, and the two obstructive *tangis* had been outwitted.

Camp at Kundiwam was pitched on a low plateau on the left bank of the Shahur, here known as the Khaisera Valley, at an altitude of about 5,500 feet above the sea. The village of Kundiwam faced the camp, on the right bank; while that of Manzara, and several smaller ones, were visible farther up the valley. They differed somewhat from those in the vicinity of Makin, in that they were completely surrounded by high mud and stone walls, and furnished with a low tower at one corner.

It was now the coldest season of the year; and the thermometer frequently registered 16° and 18° of frost —more than sufficient to freeze ink solid in its bottles within the shelter of a tent. Yet, in the early mornings, when most of us were shivering in "coats, warm, British," before the sun made his welcome warmth felt, the regimental *bhisties* (water-carriers) would be seen proceeding to the ice-fringed river, bare as to their legs, and clad in flimsy cotton garments, purely from choice, to fill their *mussaks*—then frozen as stiff as boards. And presently a string of them would wend their way back, the cheerless weighty skin vessels slung over their shoulders, and reposing placidly against the region of liver and kidney. It fairly made one gasp, and wonder how these devoted menials could escape attacks of pneumonia—to which numbers of sepoys fell victims during the expedition. It takes much, though, to curb

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the zeal of the Indian *bhisti* while tending to the wants of troops, by fetching them water at all hours of the day.

The home of many of the worst *budmashes* among the Mahsuds, and the centre whence the large body of men issued to attack the Delimitation Escort at Wana, Kundiwam was very appropriately selected as the place to which the *jirgah* of Mahsud *maliks* should be summoned to hear the terms of peace offered them. The great Council was held on January 21st, and the Mahsuds informed by General Lockhart that they were to pay a fine of 12,000 rupees, to surrender all horses and other animals, rifles and cash, captured by them at Wana; and further, to hand in 200 *jezails* and 50 breech-loading rifles. Mullah Powindah was to be expelled from the country; and the Mahsuds were to keep open the road recently constructed between Jandola and Kundiwam, as well as the one to Wana, on which we had already begun work.

Though the Martini rifles of those days were valued by Government at about 30 rupees each, they would fetch eight to ten times that sum amongst the tribes living across our border, where a breech-loader was valued by a Pathan at little less than his life. The few rifles of this description then to be found in Mahsud territory had probably been obtained at the risk of the lives of skilful trans-frontier rifle thieves in India. The surrender of fifty such would be no mean test of the Mahsud desire now for peace. The *maliks* were given until March 1st to comply with the terms; and the force would remain meanwhile in occupation of their territory.

The Sappers continued to push on with the new road from Kundiwam to Wana, 13 miles distant through the hills, when Sir William left for that camp the day after the great *jirgah*. As it was likely that the Jandola brigade would remain halted for a month or more, General Penn Symons had the perimeter defences of the

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camp much strengthened; and all proceeded to make themselves snug for the rest of the winter by constructing mud and stone fireplaces as cheery adjuncts to the various mess and office tents. The chief drawback, however, was the scarcity of fuel for the troops, and grass for the animals, which necessitated parties going out long distances daily to collect a sufficiency of these essentials.

In spite of occasional Waziri outbreaks near the L. of C. posts, established between Jandola and Kundiwam, the Mahsuds as a whole seemed inclined to knuckle under, as the result of the privations they had suffered by the invasion of their secluded haunts. And here at Kundiwam they even started to trade, by bringing in eggs and fowls for sale at exorbitant prices, as well as grass and potatoes. These last were fairly extensively cultivated in the neighbourhood, and formed a much appreciated addition to our frugal table. Within a few days of the *jirgah* also, several horses and rifles looted at Wana were brought into camp, and handed over to the chief Political Officer, who retained his headquarters at Kundiwam.

The outlook was becoming so satisfactory that General Penn Symons now decided to open out the river route between Kundiwam and Para Khel Kot. This would reduce by several miles the distance to be traversed by camel convoys plying to and from Jandola, besides greatly easing the strain on the camels by avoiding the hilly inland détour which had been constructed as an emergency measure to reach Kundiwam expeditiously. Stockley and Sheppard were away with half the 5th Company, building pillars for the frontier to be demarcated, so Travers and I remained at Kundiwam with the other half; but we had for some time past been desirous of making the two formidable *tangis* practicable for camel transport, and hailed the General's decision with delight.

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How the problem was tackled is related in "The Taming of the Narai Tangi," reproduced from *Blackwood's* in *Gun-running in the Gulf, and other Adventures.* Here it will suffice to say, therefore, that the two *tangis* were overcome in little more than a week, and were then continuously used as the Queen's Highway by our camels throughout the period the brigade remained at Kundiwam.

By the end of February the Mahsuds had complied with all the terms imposed; and even asked the chief Political Officer to try and arrange that the Indian Government should take over and administer the country for them! This request was not regarded seriously, however, by the then Lieut.-Governor of the Punjab; but one cannot now help thinking that, had this unsolicited opportunity been taken advantage of, more than thirty years ago, much subsequent trouble, loss of valuable lives, and enormous expense might have been saved. The ingrained perversity of these truculent mountaineers, who have frequently kicked over the traces since, would possibly then have been guided into saner channels, and some sort of law and order established in their midst. But only of late, after all this lapse of time, does it seem to be recognized that in the permanent occupation of part of their territory lies the sole solution of curtailing the activities of this restless tribe.

The month of March was ushered in by very inclement weather, much rain falling. On the 8th, the 5th Company was transferred to the Wana brigade, where we arrived to find that General Turner had left with a column that morning for the Dana Valley to the north-west, whither we were to follow next day. Heavy rain fell during the night, greatly increasing the weight of all tents for the mules when we started across the plain. While traversing a low range of hills bordering it to the north, we obtained a magnificent view of the whole

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Wana area stretching for a distance of 10 or 12 miles in a southerly direction, to the heights beyond which the Gomal flowed east to join the Zhob. Four years before I had been working in that gorge; and though Wana was known to us by name then, it had never been entered by Indian troops, and the plain was hidden from our sight by the confused mass of rugged hills through which the Toi threaded its course to reach the Gomal at Toi Khula.

The view conjured up visions of the miserable Christmas Day spent at that spot, where we were trounced by a piercing gale straight from the snows, accompanied by fierce squalls of rain. Our present plight was, indeed, little better, for throughout the entire march the rain continued to fall, and as we gradually ascended to higher altitudes it became exceedingly cold as well. During the last 3 miles of the 14 tramped, we passed a number of small hamlets, each with the familiar tower; but the outlook was cheerless when we at length caught a glimpse of General Turner's camp shortly before 2.30 p.m. Fortunately for us, the column had not marched that day, owing to the heavy rain and threatening prospect at dawn.

We found the camp pitched on a very rough restricted plot of ground, at a point where the Dana Valley contracted rapidly. Dana village itself was perched on a knoll about 400 yards down-stream; and as we were here more than 1,000 feet above Wana the spot proved a most uncomfortable one, for sleet and snow fell ceaselessly all that afternoon and night. It was the intention to march 9 or 10 miles farther up the valley, despite the weather, next morning; but the General received an urgent message from Force Headquarters, then in the Tochi, to despatch two Gurkha battalions of his brigade to Tank at once. He therefore returned to Wana with detachments of them that formed part of the

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column; and the remainder of this force followed next day, after being able to accomplish little in the way of reconnaissance or road-making on account of the incessant rain, sleet and snow.

At the end of March I received orders to join the 2nd Company in the Tochi, and left for Bannu on April 1st with a convoy proceeding to Kajuri Kach to bring up more supplies to Wana. Travelling along the 7 miles of road we had recently made to Karb Kot, we there swung away from the Toi stream and continued to the Katina camping-ground, another 7 miles on. Another march of 12 miles next day, over plain and through low hills bright with spring flowers, such as tulips and crocuses, landed us at the new Kajuri Kach post on the right bank of the Zhob, at its junction with the Gomal.

Four years before nothing stood there save a miserable little Waziri Levy post, the wild occupants of which nominally afforded protection to travellers spending the night without the shelter of its walls. But, actually, they were not above participating in raids on such wayfarers themselves. Those sparkling *jeux d'esprit* were now, however, a thing of the past, for an imposing fort had taken the place of the Levy post, and was garrisoned by three companies of Indian infantry, and a troop of Indian cavalry. Within its precincts were a large commissariat establishment, transport lines, barracks, a post and telegraph office, and at least three British officers always in residence. In short, all the comforts of a home suggested themselves at this outpost of Empire.

On leaving Kajuri Kach, I continued on my way over the Gwaleri Kotal, thus avoiding the formidable "Browne's Gorge" below the junction of Zhob and Gomal. The track winds up the slopes to the summit of the pass, and thence twists and turns through a network of hills whilst descending gradually to the banks of the Gomal, below

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the gorges, at Nilai Kach, distant about 16 miles from Kajuri Kach. Accommodation was there provided in a dâk bungalow within a fort, constructed at the junction of a large nullah with the Gomal. On the top of a bluff of wonderfully variegated colours was perched another post, held by a company of Indian infantry; whereas the lower one sheltered Waziri levies employed on escort duty to Jatta, the next stage towards the plains of India. Between Kajuri and Nilai Kach this work devolved on regular troops.

Soon after our departure from Kajuri Kach, we met the advance portion of a multitude of Powindahs, bound for their homes in Afghanistan now that the approaching hot weather in India had put an end to their activities there. During the greater part of the day's stage we floundered through this host, who carried their cherished goods and chattels on immense droves of camels, and even diminutive donkeys loaded to the gunwale. Men, women and children were all agog urging forward their slow-moving beasts of burden, and flocks of sheep and goats, along the narrow roadway. This was in many places cut deep into the steep hill-sides, and here the passing of the cavalcade was frequently a matter of delicate calculation, to avoid a plunge on horseback down forbidding slopes. We, too, were accompanied by camels and mules, thrusting in the opposite direction, so progress at times was laboured. Particularly was this the case near the summit of the Gwaleri, where the greatest congestion occurred, and where the serpentine track was much intersected by small nullahs which made it difficult for the contrary currents to cross without mishap.

I had often previously seen caravans proceeding up and down the Khyber, but there was an air of novelty about this Powindah migration that made it far more attractive, in my eyes. The men were fine fellows,

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with frank open faces, and were mostly armed with swords and daggers, though a few carried rifles. The youngsters were the jolliest set of rogues I had ever seen out East, laughing and shouting in the highest of spirits, and evidently in enjoyment of the most robust health by reason of their rough outdoor existence. Many of them were very fair, and not a few had quite light hair and blue eyes. The young women, too, were often really pretty; and one damsel observed would have reigned as a beauty anywhere. She seemed to be about eighteen, was unusually fair, and gazed on the turmoil around her through large blue eyes. Her smiling countenance displayed a perfect set of snowy teeth which enhanced the Madonna regularity of her features; whilst a fringe cut straight across the forehead, peeped out from beneath the dark blue cloth thrown over her head. Her practical woman's dress of pyjama trousers fitting tightly about the ankles, and surmounted by a loose dark blue gown falling to little above the knees, completed her picturesque appearance. The beauty of these females soon fades, however, owing to their hard life on the road and at home; and by the time a woman reaches 30 she usually looks old and wrinkled, though still full of work.

That the life of these wanderers is a hard one a few words will make clear. The term Powindah is applied to the great warrior-traders of Afghanistan, who yearly bring down goods from distant Bokhara, and Afghanistan, for sale in the Indian markets. They belong, in the main, to the important Ghilzai tribe, whose chief town is Ghazni, between Kandahar and Kabul. At the beginning of each cold weather these people collect their families, thousands of camels, sheep, goats, etc., to the east of Ghazni, and set out for India with their goods. They march in regular armies, and are well organized, in order to resist attack by hostile tribes, more especially the Waziris.

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On reaching Tank, Powindah arms are deposited under the charge of the Indian Government; and whilst many of the men penetrate to distant parts of the country with their goods, their families remain in the neighbourhood of Tank, where ample grazing-grounds exist for their camels and flocks, under the protection of perhaps two-thirds of the men. The approach of the hot weather recalls the itinerant traders to Tank, with goods purchased by them in India after selling what they had carried from Central Asia. Their arms are now handed back to them, and when the multitude are once again assembled, the homeward march to Ghazni begins.

But their travels do not cease there. The women and children are left behind again, as at Tank, while the men continue into Central Asia to trade in the goods brought from India, for which they find a ready market in the bazaars of Turkestan, and other remote regions. Still, they are always back at their homes in time for the annual migration to India, as soon as the cold season sets in. Thus the men are ever on the move, and their organization, with all this wealth of experience behind them, reaches a high pitch of excellence for Orientals. The rapidity with which their animals are loaded up in the mornings and the absence of confusion on the line of march is remarkable. Every man has something to do, and does it. Likewise every woman, boy and girl has an allotted task; and though all appears babel and bustle, there is method in the din and the show works smoothly.

As previously stated, it was then estimated that about 50,000 of these nomads entered the Dera Ismail Khan district every year by the Gomal route. And the advent of these warlike traders was no small boon to the Indian Government, if a frontier expedition was about to be undertaken; for these men willingly hired out their camels for transport purposes, and accompanied them

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in the field. It is probably no exaggeration to say that three-quarters of the camels employed on this Waziristan Expedition, amounting to several thousand in all, were the property of Powindahs.

In the 12-mile stage from Nilai Kach to Jatta, the road ran at first along a plateau on the right bank of the Gomal. The left bank was here bounded by a mass of low pinnacle-shaped hills, beautiful in their kaleidoscope of colour, and much furrowed and fluted by the torrential downpours to which they are at times subjected. These became gradually replaced, however, by magnificent vertical cliffs of austere conglomerate on both banks; and between them the road wound its sinuous way for some distance. Four or five miles short of Jatta we crossed the now comparatively narrow Gomal by a wooden pile bridge; and pursuing our course through the low outlying hills of Waziristan, we soon emerged on to the plains of India and reached the Murtaza post. In the three remaining miles to Jatta we followed a broad open road leading through green fields of tall wheat; and as the trees were also bursting forth into leaf, the scene was a striking and smiling change from the barren wastes of Waziristan, where we had spent the past four winter months.

At Jatta Post, too, accommodation for British officers travelling on duty was provided in a dâk bungalow; and thence an easy ride of 15 miles over level plain, and along a veritable Queen's Highway, landed us next day at the relatively important post at Tank. Here we were once more on familiar ground, and as a mail tonga plied the 40 miles between Tank and Dera Ismail Khan, this part of the journey was covered comfortably in less than six hours the following day.

The winter sojourn amongst the Mahsuds was thus brought to a close on April 7th. In order to reach the Tochi Valley, however, a further tonga journey of 90

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miles northwards along the fine frontier road to Bannu had to be undertaken on the 8th. And in the Tochi, near by but only entered shortly before by British troops for the first time, it was my lot to pass another fourteen strenuous months with the Field Force.

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CHAPTER XVI

SUMMER TIME IN THE TOCHI

After a tiring, dusty journey of twelve hours' duration, the tonga from Dera Ismail Khan landed me at Bannu at dusk, to find the Headquarters and half No. 2 Company, B.S. and Miners, under command of Captain Hunter-Weston, camped outside the fort. This half-company was bound for Abbottabad, and leaving next morning, to form a unit of the Mobile Column assembling there in connection with the Chitral Relief Force. The other half-company was to remain in the Tochi, and I received orders to proceed there and assume command of it, as part of the Tochi Column occupying that valley. I was delayed a few days awaiting my charger, marching up from Dera Ismail Khan, and then accompanied a convoy carrying supplies from Bannu to the Tochi force.

A glance at the map of the North-West Frontier of India will show that, a few miles south of the 33rd degree of north latitude, and in about longitude 70° 40′ E., there is set the cantonment of Bannu; or, as it is sometimes called, Edwardesabad, after the noted frontier general of earlier days who founded it. The station is situated in an extensive well-cultivated oasis on a great "pat" plain of considerable fertility in parts, which stretches westwards from the right bank of the lordly Indus. This plain is well watered near Bannu by the Kurram—just outside cantonments—Baran and Tochi rivers; besides other streams of less account that have

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their origin in the hills and mountainous country bounding the Bannu district to the north and west of the frontier station. Such waterways, though subject to sudden and heavy floods amid the hills, ultimately spill their diminished streams across the broken uneven plain in their efforts to join the Indus to the south-east of Bannu. That town is connected, moreover, by a fine frontier road with Kohat, some 80 miles to the north-east, and Dera Ismail Khan, close on 90 to the south. The Bannu garrison, consequently, is conveniently placed for controlling an area much favoured by trans-frontier tribes when raiding into the more open country from their mountain fastnesses, particularly those of the Waziri clans. And it is especially well placed to guard the exits of the important Kurram and Tochi rivers from the hills on to the trans-Indus plain.

The general course of the Tochi for 40 or 50 miles before it debouches with wide mouth from the hills is approximately due east, and almost along the same parallel of latitude as Bannu. But on entering the plains the river swings to the north-east, and then abruptly turns away to the south-east, crossing the above-mentioned frontier road some 12 miles south of Bannu while meandering towards the Indus. Hence the traveller bound for the Tochi from Bannu strikes the stream only after traversing 10 miles of plain, when he rises over a low barren col and descends the other side to a stony *raghza*, or elevated terrace, on the left bank of the river. Thereafter the road follows the waters of the Tochi fairly closely, and the hills draw in to form a gorge about the Shinkai Kotal, in the neighbourhood of Saidgai—a rocky and desolate study in black.

A few miles farther on, the whole aspect of the valley changes. The cliffs again recede, the gorge vanishes, and the wayfarer finds himself in a comparatively broad plain as he approaches Idak. The now flat valley is

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profusely cultivated, and many trees, consisting chiefly of mulberries, dwarf-palms, willows and tamarisk, add a refreshing sense of green to the scene in the spring and early summer. Yet the stranger within the gates is struck by the numerous defensible towers that obtrude upon the smiling landscape. The owner of each field is apparently the possessor of one, near at hand, into which he can flee for refuge when assailed by marauding bands while peacefully engaged in his agricultural pursuits. Such towers are generally quite isolated, and at some distance from villages proper; whereas the latter are often imposing collections of huts surrounded by high mud walls, and provided with additional towers for purposes of defence. The peace and security of British India clearly lie behind.

The shingly bed of the river is usually more than 200 yards wide, and in certain reaches over a quarter of a mile across; and down this the crystal-clear stream normally flows in several shallow channels. In its upper courses the river is confined as a rule between low loamy banks, easily surmounted. Thus the Tochi is practically fordable everywhere; and in the early days of its occupation by the British the nullah bed formed the highway for the force, because transport animals could there the more freely move on a broad front. Here and there, though, deep pools exist, generally at bends under rocky bluffs rising abruptly out of the bed of the stream. And in these many a refreshing plunge and swim could be had during the hot weather; while the game mahseer also congregated there in numbers and afforded the fishermen of the force much pleasurable sport.

Nevertheless, after heavy torrential rains the gently murmuring waters of the Tochi are quickly transformed into a dangerous raging river, which carries all before it. The rapidity with which these formidable spates

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come down may best be illustrated, perhaps, by an exciting episode experienced by the Tochi Column during its early existence.

It was glorious spring weather towards the middle of April; and despite the more than genial warmth, nature seemed almost at her best, for not a cloud was visible. The force had made a long trying march down the valley and, encumbered by many camels, the Staff decided to pitch camp on a broad expanse of sand and shingle in the river bed. Towards nightfall, distant ominous rumbles of thunder higher up the valley caused a sensation of uneasiness in the minds of those who had unwisely selected their present resting-place for the night. Steps were being taken to transfer the entire camp to the cultivated bank above, for greater security, when the approaching flood was reported. Then followed an indescribable scene of haste and confusion, and it was only by the merest margin that the force averted a most serious catastrophe, whilst it laboured amid the thunder, lightning and torrential downpour that descended upon it, as well as the flood. Had the storm burst during the small hours when the force was deep in slumber, it seems likely that it would have practically ceased to exist as a military factor in the Tochi, until the resulting losses in equipment and transport had been made good from India. Never again was the seductive river bed resorted to as a camping-ground.

Still, it may with some truth be said that, at certain seasons of the year, many prospects in the Tochi please, "and only man is vile." The inhabitants of the valley at this time were a fanatical, treacherous, priest-ridden moslem tribe known as Dawaris. Their fighting strength was then estimated at some 5,000 men, about equally distributed between two clans, the Tapazai and Malai, which were again subdivided into several minor sections. The Dawaris possessed poor reputations as

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fighters, and were preyed upon by the more numerous and warlike Mahsud and Darwesh Khel Waziris, who periodically descended into the valley—a veritable Promised Land—and carried off cattle, corn and other commodities, with no scruples in slaughtering such Dawaris as ventured to offer resistance to these forays. Hence the numerous scattered towers, that served as centres of safety when plundering bands of Waziris appeared in the offing. The Dawaris were, moreover, a peculiarly licentious people, by repute. Their unnatural vices were a byword even among Pathans; and the average trans-frontier man is not over-squeamish in such matters.

A curious feature regarding the inhabitants of the valley was the presence of a large number of Hindus, who had migrated from India and were living among these fanatical moslems in their villages. This migration dates back, by tradition, to more than 800 years; to the time, indeed, when Sultan Mahmud, King of Ghazni, is credited with carrying off large batches of Hindus with his army, after an invasion of India. The descendants of these Hindus possessed land of their own in the Tochi, which they cultivated freely, whilst living apparently on friendly terms with the rabid Dawaris, who seemed to molest them but little. As there were several thousand such Hindus settled along the Tochi, they married solely among themselves, and seldom visited the plains of India in search of a wife.

The Dawaris certainly displayed considerable skill as agriculturists, constructing small irrigation channels from the river to water their fields over the entire valley. Bearing in mind that these primitive tillers of the soil possess no instruments to assist them in a survey of the ground, and are dependent on their eyes alone to carry out their elaborate schemes, one can but admire the

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successful manner in which the canalization of their land has been accomplished.

Yet, in some respects, their husbandry methods were archaic to a degree; and caused me no little amusement the first time I watched a Dawari threshing out newly-cut corn. The threshing-ground consisted of a flat mud-plastered area outside the village, with a stout post driven into the centre of the plot. The sheaves were spread out in the usual way round the post, to which was closely tethered a patient ox; and to him, in turn, were attached six or seven diminutive donkeys, each secured to the next in line with grass rope about the neck. The ox, acting as pivot of the menagerie, revolved on his own axis, as it were, round and round the post; whilst the donkeys wheeled round their more sedate companion, urged thereto by the efforts of small boys armed with sticks. Thus they trampled out the corn underfoot by a perpetual wheeling in line. Round and round they continuously circled, maintaining almost perfect dressing, though the wretched animals must have been well-nigh dizzy from their circumscribed movements. The stolid ox in the centre seemed to regard the whole business as thoroughly derogatory to his dignity, despite his humble associates being far more agile than he; whilst the antics of the boys keeping the beasts incessantly on the move with their sticks and much vituperation, all combined to present a truly Old Testament impression of one branch of Tochi agriculture.

The occupation of the Tochi Valley by British troops was first undertaken early in 1895, as already related; and when the greater part of the Bannu brigade withdrew after the penetration of this previously little-known region, a Tochi Column was formed, under the command of Colonel Meiklejohn of the 20th Punjabis, a fine old soldier who had cleared the Delimitation Escort camp at Wana of Waziris at the point of the bayonet with

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two companies of his regiment in November. His force now consisted of the bulk of the 3rd Punjab Cavalry, the 2nd, 6th and 20th Punjab Infantry regiments, No. 1 Kohat Mountain Battery, and half No. 2 Co. B.S. and Miners; with the usual complement of Hospital, and Supply and Transport units, etc.

In April this force was concentrated 2 or 3 miles down-river of Idak, and some 24 miles distant only from Bannu. But as the hot weather was approaching apace it was decided to march higher up the valley to derive the benefit of a somewhat cooler clime. This step entailed the construction of intermediate posts between the supply-base at Bannu, and the headquarters of the Column, for the protection and accommodation of frequent convoys passing up and down the Tochi.

This task proved a sultry one; and I have unpleasant recollections of spending the hours between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. (when the sun was too fierce to permit work being performed in the open at that trying season of the year) lying prone on my camp-bed in an 80-lb. Kabul tent, stripped to the buff. But even in such light attire one never ceased from pouring with perspiration in the sweltering heat at Saidgai, Idak and Miram Shah; whilst the attention of myriads of flies, swarming about one's bared anatomy, caused one to suspect that the other plagues of Egypt were but of small account.

An eminence 2½ miles up-stream of the force camp, and immediately south of Idak village which it overlooked, was chosen as suitable for the first post up the Tochi beyond Saidgai. When completed and occupied by a garrison, early in May, the Column marched some 12 miles still farther up the valley. Here at Miram Shah another post was constructed on the right bank of a large nullah, down which a small stream flowed from the north to join the Tochi, about a mile and a half below the site selected. The post was situated on the southern

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limits of the open Dandi plain, extending several miles to the north and west. It thus possessed an admirable field of fire, though somewhat commanded at a range of about 1,200 yards from a high rocky bluff to the east—on the far bank of the nullah.

A further advance of 8 or 9 miles up the valley was made on May 13th, and was attended by the first serious outrage against the force since the departure of the original Field Force. Owing to the great heat, camp was aroused at 2.30 a.m., the animals loaded and the whole column on the move before 4 by bright moonlight. During the entire march villages were passed on both banks of the river, while the cultivation proved profuse, and trees and towers plentiful. Shortly before reaching our camping-ground at Boya, the hills on the left bank closed in and descended to near the river bed; whilst broken heights on the right bank also approached the river closely.

When the rear-guard arrived at this point, the adjutant of the 6th P.I., Lieutenant Limond, dismounted and watered his pony; and then decided to complete on foot the short remaining distance to where camp was being pitched. Whilst walking along the far bank he was met by four Dawaris, proceeding down-stream, and as they drew near the leading man, a big burly individual, smiled in a friendly manner and greeted the officer with the usual salutation of peace. Barely had he uttered the words when the treacherous ruffian whipped out his dagger and fell upon Limond, stabbing him in the stomach. Thereupon two of his confederates also joined in a dagger attack on the now prostrate adjutant. Unfortunately Limond's revolver was unloaded; but he struggled to his knees, drew it from its case and dealt his first assailant a blow on the forehead with its butt, which momentarily stunned the man.

All this took place within 30 yards of the rear-guard,

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marching along the bed of the river; but the attack was so sudden and unexpected that nothing could have prevented it. The O.C. immediately ordered four of his men to load their rifles, but they were unable to fire as Limond and his assailants were inextricably mixed up. Limond's orderly dashed up to his master's assistance, however, whereon the *budmashes* turned their attention to him, knifed him badly and wounded him severely in the side with a pistol shot; whilst Limond's syce, too, received a fatal pistol wound during the scuffle.

The Dawaris then bolted, but were quickly shot down, with the exception of the fourth man, who had cleared off at the commencement of the attack and concealed himself in a patch of rushes close by. Several sowars with the rear-guard gave chase to the fugitives, and on coming up with the three who had dropped wounded in their tracks, literally hacked them to pieces with their swords. Parties then searched the marsh and captured the fourth man, who proved to be a lad of 17 or 18, and was marched off as a prisoner to camp. The whole incident had occupied but a few seconds, and dhoolies were summoned from camp to convey the wounded thither.

It was a mournful procession that arrived there, the rear being brought up by the three bearing the mangled remains of the Dawaris. These were burnt that evening as a deterrent to similar outbreaks in the future; for bodies of the "Faithful" thus treated were popularly supposed to be denied the joys of Paradise. But Limond, alas, succumbed to his injuries the following day, and his body was escorted down the valley for interment in the Bannu cemetery.

As an immediate reprisal for the outrage, a punitive force was despatched early next morning to destroy certain houses in the village of Khare Kila, where the *budmashes* had resided. The column left Boya at 4.30

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a.m. to march some 5 miles down the Tochi; and found the village to be a very large one, picturesquely situated on the right bank, and almost completely hidden from view by a thick grove of mulberry trees. The force of all arms was drawn up in the river bed to cover the advance of a company of the 6th and 20th P.I.'s, and the Sappers detailed for the demolition. The approach to the village was through fields of wheat, and over irrigation channels bordered by mulberries; while just outside its walls were delightful shady arbours beneath great trees, where men and boys took their siestas during the heat of the day. Places reserved for prayer were similarly sheltered, but set apart.

Once inside the village, we found ourselves confronted by a maze of narrow passages, 3 to 4 feet wide, and confined by high mud walls which divided the courtyard of one house from the next. Entrance to each yard was gained through stout wooden doors let into the passage walls; and some little time elapsed before it could be decided which particular houses in this bewildering labyrinth were to be destroyed.

In view of the daring and fanatical outburst against the force, it struck me, an ignorant subaltern, no doubt, in such matters, that our Political Officer was unduly sensitive that no harm should be done in the village, save to the personal property of the murderers alone. Anyhow, it was firmly impressed upon me that the slightest risk of fire destroying other habitations in their vicinity was to be most carefully guarded against. Slabs of gun-cotton, let into the inside corners of the walls of the mud huts, soon razed the shanties to the ground when detonated; and my chief regret, I remember, was that no loot fell to my lot, beyond an inferior type of Koran, which I secured in the abode of one of the assassins. Small good the perusal of its pious precepts had done its treacherous owner! Little else of a salutary

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nature was inflicted on the village for harbouring dangerous fanatics; and the column then marched home.

Next day the camp was moved another 4 miles up the valley to Dehgan; and here the youth captured at the time of the outrage was executed. This was my first experience of seeing a bound and defenceless human being shot down by a firing party; and it was certainly an impressive scene. Early in the afternoon I received orders to prepare a grave, and erect a post facing it, to which the youth was to be secured when meeting his fate; so observed the precaution of throwing up, at the same time, a small stop-butt in rear to catch possible bullets. At 6 p.m. the lad was escorted to the scene of execution, where a strong contingent of the 6th P.I. was drawn up. Led to the stake and there blindfolded, he was bound hand and foot in a kneeling position to the post, and faced the firing party of ten men and his own grave. During this trying ordeal the youth displayed the utmost nonchalance, while murmuring prayers from the Koran audibly.

On the command "Fire!" the ten Martini bullets entered his body simultaneously from a distance of twelve paces, the tremendous impact causing the frame of the misguided young man to give a great lurch towards the post; but after a few muscular movements of the head all became still. The body was at once cut away from the stake; and life being pronounced extinct, it was toppled over into the grave, and quickly covered with earth by hospital *kahars*.

No sooner had this act of justice been carried out when sounds of firing broke out lower down the valley, midway between our present camp and that of the previous day. A troop of cavalry immediately rode out to ascertain the cause, preceded by half a company of the 20th P.I., who were quicker off the mark in answering to the alarm. A large armed party of Dawaris was shortly met,

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and they reported that a gang of Mahsuds had raided their camels whilst grazing, and had made off with nine. The Dawaris had succeeded in recovering six of the animals, but the Mahsuds had so long a start that they got clear away with the rest. The shots heard had been fired by the Dawaris to warn their fellow-tribesmen that Mahsud raiders were about.

It is a curious commentary on frontier life that, outside one limit of the camp, we had just executed a Dawari for complicity in an unwarranted outrage against the force; whilst from the other end of it a party of cavalry and infantry sallied forth to assist other Dawaris against the depredations of their hereditary foes, the Mahsuds.

Yet one cannot pretend that the Dawaris regarded our presence in the Tochi with favour, as affording them some protection from marauding bands of their highland neighbours. Rather the reverse; for during the next fortnight our camp was almost nightly sniped and subjected to alarums and excursions; whilst one was invariably met by evil looks and scowling countenances when passing Dawaris at work in their fields.

Meanwhile, the posts along the L. of C. had not been altogether free from hostile acts, either. Idak was sniped, and the telegraph wire cut a short distance from the post. On May 17th a "ghazi" outrage took place at Miram Shah, resulting in the death of an N.C.O. of the 2nd P.I. This *naik* was in charge of the water picquet, and seems to have strolled some 50 yards away from his men. Four Dawaris driving along a flock of sheep drew near and then suddenly fell upon him with their daggers. One of the assassins was shot down, and another captured; but the other two escaped, though one was reported to be badly wounded.

A week later a daring attempt was made on the post itself during the small hours. This time Mamiyat Khel Waziris from the mountains to the south, between

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Miram Shah and Dehgan, were said to be the offenders. Anyhow, about 1 a.m. several tribesmen tried to rush one of the sentries at the entrance to the west bastion of the post. One Waziri was shot down outside the post, but another scrambled over the breastwork and knifed two sepoys sleeping at the foot of it, before he was knocked over with the butt of a rifle and despatched. Altogether four of the assailants, as later ascertained, were killed and one wounded. Both sepoys succumbed to their injuries, and the subadar-major of the 2nd P.I. had an extremely narrow shave.

During the excitement of the attack, it was reported that several men were lying low in the ditch outside the breastwork, where they were practically safe from rifle-fire in the dark, as that side of the post was 160 yards in length. The subadar-major impetuously leaned over the parapet to verify the statement, and was at once saluted by a pistol-shot from a man in the ditch, at a range of only a few feet. By a miracle the bullet just missed the Indian officer's head; but before he could withdraw it he received a sword-cut on the back of his neck from another occupant of the ditch. Here again his luck was in, for the hanging end of his thick silk *pagri* saved him from a severe wound. Throwing up his arm to ward off a second blow, however, he received a cut that severed the tendons in one of his fingers.

Wali Khan, this senior Indian officer of the 2nd P.I., was a man with a grand frontier record; and a few days after his providential escape his heart was greatly rejoiced by a personal telegram from General Sir William Lockhart, then at Murree, inquiring as to his progress. Small wonder is it, therefore, that that famous frontier General was beloved by all ranks of the Indian Army.

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CHAPTER XVII

LATTER TOCHI DAYS

Having completed all work immediately necessary at Column Headquarters, Dehgan, I returned with my Sappers to Miram Shah the day after the attempt on the post. The garrisons of the 2nd P.I. at Saidgai, Idak and Miram Shah were now complaining of the great heat in tents, for it was the end of May; and my orders were to erect more substantial shelters for the men in these posts as expeditiously as possible.

The Hindu inhabitants of the Tochi were accordingly approached, since they were the chief traders and bunniahs in the valley. It was hoped, therefore, that they would readily supply the requisite pine saplings and *chittai* (dwarf-palm leaf matting) for the work at a reasonable price. But the bunniahs of the Tochi proved no less grasping than their *confrères* in India, and deals with them were irksome as they ever sought to get the better of one. Thus the evil months of the hot season were not soothed by the ceaseless manœuvres of these gentry being added to one's other trials. Happily I was able, after a time, to obtain the services of Lieutenant W. S. Traill, R.E., a most efficient subaltern, from India to assist me in the task. Then it became possible to distribute the half-company of Sappers between the three posts, and the erection of shelters for the men proceeded apace.

As it had been shown that reckless men could leap the ditch of the Miram Shah post and scramble over

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the breastwork, strong *abattis* was now fixed along the glacis of the ditch; and other thorny devices furnished to prevent a man, once in the V-shaped ditch, from clambering over the parapet. In this manner the perimeter was converted into an extremely formidable obstacle, and no further attempts to force an entry into the post were made.

During June, July and August, life on the Tochi line of communications was far from a rosy existence. The heat at times was terrific, and violent dust-storms broke over us at intervals. Mosquitoes combined to make night hideous after flies had tormented us throughout the hours of daylight. We were periodically visited by thunderstorms and tropical downpours of rain, causing heavy floods in the Tochi, and transforming lesser dry nullah beds into roaring torrents. Such deluges were instrumental, however, in lowering the temperature for a day or two, though the thermometer would soon mount again to 115° F., and over, in our tents. Now and then, too, we were subjected to slight shocks of earthquake, never a pleasant experience. Still, the small party of four or five officers at Miram Shah usually contrived to keep up their spirits. It was not possible to be dull with Kipling's hero "Stalky" in any post, or under any conditions. He was then the adjutant of the 20th P.I., and his humorous observations and outlook on life vested our surroundings with a solace that made them almost attractive.

On the whole, the health of the troops in the posts remained good, despite the heat, as our water-supply was carefully conserved against contamination. The garrisons were regularly relieved about once a month, each of the three battalions in the Tochi Column taking it in turn to occupy Saidgai, Idak and Miram Shah. Moreover, as soon as shelters had been erected for the men to lie under during the great heat of the day, we commenced the construction of small sun-dried brick huts,

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and a mess-house, for the British officers in the posts. Needless to say, these were much appreciated, for their light mud roofs afforded a welcome protection against the fierce rays of the sun.

The first mud hut for officers at Miram Shah was completed one sweltering afternoon in the middle of July. Pleased with the progress, I strolled over to our brick-field, where other Sappers were turning out thousands of bricks in moulds, and drying them in the sun for the building operations still before us. On my return to the post, a large white placard, fastened over the door of the newly-finished hut, caught my attention; for on this was inscribed in bold capitals of red and blue chalk, "GOD BLESS OUR HOME." It was not difficult to guess that "Stalky" had taken advantage of my absence to call down this benediction on the humble abode which was to serve as his lodging during his tour of service on the L. of C.; but I sometimes wonder if this invocation can be read as throwing doubt on the stability of the structure assigned to him.

Throughout the hot weather constant visits of inspection up and down the line, and even into Bannu, had to be carried out by my brother subaltern and myself, in connection with the hutting of the troops. Though trying, these tours helped to keep us fit and well, for we had no time to go sick; nor had our men. But when the heat was at its worst outdoor work had to be done between 5.30 and 8 in the mornings, and from 5 to 7.30 in the evenings. Longer hours under that pitiless sun, we found, were pretty certain to bowl the men over with sun-fever. Still, our work was varied and interesting, and the Sappers answered splendidly to the calls on their powers of endurance. As a result of their strenuous labours they were probably the fittest body of men in the whole force. It was not all work and no play, however, for one evening in the week was always set aside for

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athletic sports, at which small money prizes were given, and the men thus kept in good spirits and fettle.

The worst of the hot weather being over towards the end of August, the main body of the Tochi Column marched down from Boya to occupy a strong perimeter camp previously prepared to abut on the existing Miram Shah post. From that date onwards steps were taken to improve the amenities of the force for the approaching cold season. A race-course, cricket ground, and mud tennis courts were created immediately to the south of the defensible area. Fireplaces were added to messes and huts, and hospital wards erected for pneumonia and pulmonary cases. The Idak post was moved to a more convenient site near the tonga track, lately constructed between Saidgai and Miram Shah; and considerable improvements made to the Saidgai post. Thus we sought to counter the anticipated rigours of the coming winter in tolerable comfort.

Once the cold weather descended upon us, life in the Tochi took on a very different aspect, and developed into a comparatively pleasant picnic at Miram Shah. It was delightful to speed on an early morning gallop round the race-course before commencing the labours of the day; and at their close to have some practice on matting at the cricket-nets, or take a hand in a tennis four. Cricket matches between the various units of the force, gymkhanas, athletic sports, and "bumble-puppy" race-meetings, all added something to the joys of existence.

Thus the hours of daylight devoted to work and recreation passed quickly enough to gratify the wants of most of the Tochi band of brothers. Nor were the evenings in the different messes always precisely sedate; for one can recall many cheery guest-nights when the fun waxed fast and furious up to a much later hour than was good for early risers about to face another strenuous day's toil. In those unregenerate days it was frequently my

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lot to warble ditties to my banjo, and vamp accompaniments for rousing songs and choruses of budding Carusos in the crowd. We were blessed, too, by a performer on the pipes, and an "ethereal cuss" who played upon a tin whistle; so our music was varied, though hardly sublime.

In my mind's eye I see one jovial portly major, who was ever the life and soul of such gatherings. The later the hour the more exuberant he became. Yet he would be one of the first at breakfast next morning, cheerfully regaling himself on draught beer in place of his usual tea or coffee. It nearly made one shudder when he assured us that, "It's the finest thing in the world, my dear fellow, after a big night. Most important to float the liver, and keep it well away from the ribs. You can't come to much harm then." The majority were content to take his word for it; but he did not live, alas, to reach a ripe old age.

It was possible now to snatch opportunities for drill, and to get the Sappers ship-shape after their continuous manual labours of the past seven or eight months; and this enabled the half-company to take part with credit in a big parade of the whole force for the edification of an enterprising M.P., who visited the Tochi with credentials from Army Headquarters towards the middle of December. He was good enough to speak in eulogistic terms of the efficiency of the force; and in the afternoon was prevailed upon to join in a hawking expedition over the Dandi plain, to the north of the post.

The Tochi Column was fortunate in possessing authorities on divers forms of sport; and we were not least indebted to an officer of the 3rd P.C. for providing many an exciting ride after obarah, and other game birds, in the wake of hawks captured and trained by himself in camp. This pundit is now a Professor of Oriental Languages in one of the home Universities—a strange contrast in environment to those Tochi days, which, it

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is to be hoped, he may not altogether have forgotten amid his present pursuits.

The M.P. was the first of a stream of cold-weather visitors to the Tochi—chiefly important officials from Army Headquarters. Amongst others the Q.M.G. in India, high medical authorities, and General Sir Power Palmer, commanding the Punjab Frontier Force, sojourned in our midst for a few days, at one time or another. And they all had the doubtful pleasure of being subjected to a musical evening at the hands of us enthusiastic songsters.

Certain units of the Tochi Column were relieved during the cold weather, and their places taken by other frontier regiments from Bannu, and elsewhere. Many cheery companions thus left us, but other equally entertaining new-comers stepped into their shoes. And so the happy harmony of the Tochi force continued to prevail. Even after this lapse of time one can vividly recall some hilarious nights when a recent arrival, a tall, debonair, "Piffer" cavalry captain, convulsed gatherings with his grotesque impersonations of a stump orator, comic singer and eccentric dancer. *Tempora mutantur.* The last time we met he was commanding a division in Mesopotamia during the Great War; and until lately was holding a high appointment in India, only to die, alas, soon after his return to England for good.

Now all this while we had endeavoured to improve relations with the inhabitants of the valley by utilizing them on various works, for which they were well paid; by setting aside particular events for them in our periodical athletic meetings, which they eagerly entered; and in other ways, whereby the British possess the happy knack of turning foes into friends more quickly perhaps than any other nation. Consequently the majority of the Dawaris in the lower reaches of the Tochi seemed to have become reconciled to the presence of the force, and

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apparently regarded the British as not such bad fellows after all. But there still remained a leaven of malcontents, who were probably urged to deeds of fanaticism by their *mullahs*. These priests presumably resented their authority over their followers being undermined by the Political Officers of alien troops in the Tochi. Promises of the joys of Paradise were, no doubt, held out as incentives to those who risked their lives in taking that of British officers, or other "infidels" in the force. Be that as it may, after a considerable period of relative quiescence, the indignation of all was again aroused by the news of a fresh outrage.

This time the victim was a junior Political Officer, Casson by name, and the scene staged a few miles out of Idak in the middle of March. Casson was proceeding from Idak to Saidgai, accompanied by Captain Eales of the 2nd P.I., Zafar Khan, a native Political Assistant, two sowars and a few followers. On reaching the village of Hassu Khel, the party dismounted near a ruined mosque. A Dawari standing near by, enveloped in a *chuddar* (cloak), moved unpretentiously towards them. Unseen by Casson, the man suddenly threw aside his *chuddar*, drew a dagger and pistol from his waistband, and stabbed the Political before he was even aware of the wretch's presence. Zafar Khan, fortunately close at hand, at once dashed up from behind and flung his arms around those of the fanatic. A sharp struggle ensued, the man doing his utmost to disengage his pinioned arms to stab his capturer, whom he wounded slightly in several places. Eales then rushed to the rescue, and gained possession of the man's knife; whereupon the latter snapped his pistol in Eales's face, but providentially it missed fire.

Whilst Zafar Khan and the Dawari were still wrestling in deadly embrace on the ground, Eales managed to withdraw Zafar Khan's sword from its sheath, and dealt

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the would-be murderer a heavy blow with the weapon across the neck. This probably killed him; but to make assurance doubly sure, the now freed Zafar Khan fired several shots with his revolver into the prostrate form of the fanatic; and one of the sowars, too, slashed the body fiercely with his sabre.

Casson, scarcely realizing the serious nature of his wound, had remained leaning, meanwhile, against the wall of the mosque for support. A charpoy was requisitioned from the village, and on it Casson was conveyed back to the Idak post, whence a telegram was despatched to Miram Shah asking for medical assistance. The doctor who hurried down was happily able to report that though Casson was dangerously wounded, the dagger having passed through his liver, the blow was not necessarily fatal.

I had left Idak only the day before the outrage on inspection duty, and returned from Miram Shah to continue my work on this new post the following morning. At the half-way change of escort I met the doctor on his ride back to Miram Shah, and he gave me reassuring accounts of Casson's condition. He seemed hopeful of his ultimate recovery, but asked me not to let the patient know the full extent of his injury. On arrival I found him cheery and quite free from pain, while he volunteered a good deal of information regarding the attack on himself. He was obviously unaware that the dagger had penetrated his liver from behind, and come out at the front of his body; for the doctor had successfully lulled him into the belief that he had received two wounds, both slight, one in the back, and the other in his right side. Nevertheless, Casson seemed puzzled about the matter, and kept assuring me that he had no recollection of the man dealing him a blow from the front as well as from behind. Which was not to be wondered at.

And so Casson made a rapid and complete recovery.

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In less than a week he was pronounced out of danger, and in little over a fortnight was taking his meals with the O.C. post and myself. Zafar Khan, in due course, received an Indian Order of Merit, for gallantry; and the evening before I returned to Miram Shah with my Sappers, he gave a great *tamasha* in the post at Idak to celebrate Casson's escape. By some means he had imported a number of musicians and dancing boys from his native country, Marwat, to entertain us; and during our dinner that night sent in several delectable country dishes for our consumption.

On April 3rd we were back again once more at Miram Shah, and pushed forward with all speed to provide the whole force there with huts and shelters against the coming hot weather. As the half-company were under orders to rejoin the headquarters and remainder of the company at Rawalpindi, so soon as the work was completed, the incentive to the men to give of their best was great. Thus the next six weeks were strenuous to a degree, for when May was ushered in the temperature rose rapidly and intensified our toil. Yet we made time to construct a new luxury for the British officers of the force, in the shape of an ice-pit. A shaft was sunk about twenty feet deep in the centre of the camp, and several long galleries driven, radiating outwards from the bottom of the shaft. Each unit was provided with its own gallery, furnished with a felt-covered door at its mouth, in which the snow from the hills around was to be stored for use during the hot-weather months. Over the ground level mouth of the shaft, a felt-lined trap-door was fitted, and a hut, with especially thick walls and roof, constructed over the entrance to the pit. In this manner the fierce outside heat was excluded from the galleries, when the shaft was descended for the purpose of drawing on the cold storage supplies below.

At length all work was done, and on May 15th the

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half-company marched out of Miram Shah, preceded by the bands of the 1st Sikhs and 6th P.I., which played us down to the river crossing. Under a farewell bombardment of "salaams," and "stari mah shehs" (May you never be weary!) from the Pathans, we there struck east for India. Bannu was reached on the 17th; but a roasting time lay before us through the Salt Range en route to Kohat, where we arrived on the 22nd. Halting there one day, the remaining 31 miles to the Indus was accomplished in two marches, and the river crossed by a bridge of boats at Khushalgarh. Train was taken on the far bank for Rawalpindi, and we entered our destination in the early morning of May 27th, 1896. Thus our connection with the Tochi was brought to a close.

We had spent many happy days there, on the whole; for when one is young one can get a good deal of enjoyment out of life under adverse climatic conditions, so long as one is surrounded by congenial companions. Speaking generally, we had been a real band of brothers, and pulled well together throughout our residence in the Tochi. We may have been a somewhat light-hearted crew; but it is instructive to learn that out of that cheery crowd of captains and subalterns, one rose to be Governor and Commander-in-Chief of an important colony. Several climbed to the rank of Major-General; and two attained to even a giddier height in the Indian Army. So there must have been some germs of greatness, intermingled with those of youthful madness, in the Tochi days here recorded.

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CHAPTER XVIII

A MIXED BAG

On arrival at Rawalpindi, I handed the half-company Sappers and Miners over to Captain S. H. Powell,[1] who had recently succeeded Captain A. G. Hunter-Weston[2] in command of No. 2 Coy., and continued to Ferozepore, where I rejoined the Military Works under Captain H. C. Nanton, who was married to a Canadian cousin of mine. My sojourn there lasted but a few days, however, as three months' privilege leave to England was sanctioned me, and I left for Bombay, pleased to escape the worst of the hot weather, which had already become extremely trying at Ferozepore. The six weeks I managed to obtain at home by travelling overland from, and to, Marseilles, passed all too quickly, much of it being spent with my parents at Clifton, for my father had now retired; and September found me back at Ferozepore.

But whilst on leave I had been transferred to Karachi, so now set forth for that port. I was able, however, to spend two or three days at Hyderabad, Sind, en route, with my eldest brother in the R.A.M.C. and his wife, whom I met for the first time. I made the acquaintance there, too, of Captain "Mickey" Tighe, D.S.O., of the Baluchis, who later became a near neighbour and close friend in England; but died in London a few years ago

[1] Now Major-General, C.B.

[2] Now Lieut.-General Sir Aylmer, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.P.

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under tragic circumstances when Lieut.-General Sir Michael Tighe, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., etc. A distinguished soldier, and noted big game hunter, he was withal one of the most unassuming, charming men I have ever met.

The next six months passed very pleasantly at Karachi, where I lived in the Field Battery mess; for besides getting cricket, racquets, tennis and badminton, I found myself in a position to take up polo for the first time, so purchased two trained Arab ponies for the purpose. The only British regiment in the station was the Wiltshires, who supplied the bulk of the players; and I owed much to the late Major Clery Hill, a most entertaining personality, for his patient instruction. I feel, however, that belated apologies are still due to the other players for such risks as they incurred during my early efforts, and until I had gained sufficient experience to hold my own fairly well on the field. Then I was able to realize that no game can touch polo for thrills, speed and resource, though turf was not at our disposal and we gaily galloped about on salt-impregnated sand.

Once the monsoon with its damp, muggy atmosphere had blown itself out, the cold weather at Karachi was delightful, and the round of gaieties almost continuous. My old chief, Colonel "Biddy" Graves, too, passed through on his way home for the last time, and it was a real joy to meet him again after an interval of more than five years. Here also I heard Mrs. Annie Besant speak for the first time, in the Town Hall, which was packed with natives attending her series of lectures on Theosophy. She made a deep impression on all, not only by reason of her striking appearance in native costume on the platform, but because her oratory surpassed anything to which I had previously listened. Her flow of fine language for an hour or more was amazing, for never once was there the semblance of hesitation or repetition,

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and she held her audience spell-bound from her first word to the last.

My stay at Karachi was brought to a close in March, 1897, when I was offered, and accepted, an appointment on the Hyderabad-Godavery Railway, then being surveyed in parts and constructed in others. The only passenger proceeding in the mail-steamer with me to Bombay was Clery Hill, about to become Inspector of Gymnasia at Poona; but he was a host in himself, and entertained the captain and me throughout the calm voyage with his endless fund of amusing yarns. From Bombay I pushed on at once to Secunderabad, and there came again under my old chief of the Uganda Railway survey, Pringle, who had married one of Sir John Kirk's charming daughters some eighteen months before, and was now the proud father of a little daughter.

The Chief Engineer of the new project was Pringle's cousin, G. P. Rose, a distinguished civil engineer who had carried out the construction of the Khojak tunnel near Quetta, and selected Pringle as one of his Superintending Engineers for this fresh venture; while Pringle, in turn, had applied for me and several other R.E. officers as his Executive Engineers for the task before him. The section assigned to me was the Hyderabad end of the line, which had yet to be surveyed and the alignment laid out on the ground; so the greater part of my work was out of doors, and as the survey progressed farther afield, through Bolarum and beyond, I went into camp and paid periodical visits to Pringle to report conditions.

During one such visit, when the heat of summer had descended upon us, he and I were reclining in long chairs after a keen game of tennis, only to be disturbed by a telegram handed over to him in the dark. With difficulty he made out its purport, and I was thrilled to learn that the Foreign Department wished to know if I

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was available, and willing, to accompany an expedition about to start from England for East Africa under Major Macdonald, R.E. Needless to say, I was only too willing; but in common fairness to Mr. Rose it seemed that he should have the final word in the matter, as my leaving at such short notice would, I feared, cause him no little inconvenience. Mr. Rose most unselfishly agreed that if the appointment offered me was likely to benefit me in a military sense, he would not stand in my way; but if the work was of a civil nature alone, then he considered it my duty to remain with him. We could get no details from Simla; but thirty-six hours later I received a cable from Macdonald himself, which pointed to the enterprise being a military one, so Mr. Rose readily assented to my accompanying the expedition, and wired my acceptance to Simla.

I left Secunderabad on June 13th, and met Norman Macdonald (then in the 14th Sikhs) at Bombay, where we were joined by a contingent consisting of an Indian officer and thirty N.C.O.'s and men of the 14th and 15th Sikhs. Twenty-five Indian carts and 100 bullocks and buffaloes also accompanied us in the *Canara* for Mombasa, via Aden, where the rest of the expedition under Macdonald were to meet us, and tranship to our B.I. boat. Major-General Sir William Gatacre, commanding at Bombay, took great interest in the mysterious venture that lay ahead of us, and on several occasions visited the docks whilst the ship was being fitted up for our requirements; and finally inspected the Sikhs and bade us God-speed when the *Canara* cast off in face of the monsoon on June 18th.

Thus I resumed my acquaintance with the Dark Continent, of which I was to see much in the course of three separate expeditions between the years 1897 and 1901. The mutiny of the Sudanese in Uganda, and other exciting experiences, cause those five years to stand

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out as landmarks in my life; but my association with African wilds was brought to a close largely by a virulent attack of scurvy, which nearly terminated my career, when in command of an ill-fated expedition in 1901. Safety was only reached after great hardships, and with the loss of forty-five of its original personnel of sixty-two souls, during our long trek from Omdurman through the Sudan, by way of Lake Rudolf, and so to the Uganda Railway at Lake Nakuru.

When the remnants of the expedition returned by sea from Mombasa to Cairo, in October, 1901, I was gratified to receive a telegram from the Foreign Office, offering me the command of another Boundary Commission shortly leaving England for the West Coast of Africa. But this honour I was obliged to decline. I was still convalescing from the effects of scurvy, and had partially lost the sight of my right eye, due to a hæmorrhage in the retina when the attack was at its worst. This has never completely cleared to this day. Of the thirteen years then spent by me in the tropics, eight and a half had been under canvas, chiefly in Central Africa and along the North-West Frontier of India; and I had begun to show that my stamina had thereby been reduced. Thus I felt I could not do justice to the undertaking offered me without a considerable rest in England first, in order to recuperate.

Hence I resolved for the present to abandon "bush-whacking," which had brought me a brevet-majority, C.M.G. and D.S.O.; and to try and cultivate a knowledge of the Staff side of the military art. And with this object I worked in London during the summer of 1902 for the Staff College examination. My old friend Stockley and I shared "digs" together near Earl's Court, in order to attend lectures at Messrs. Carlile and Gregson, the crammers; and in due course I found myself among the fortunate ones who joined at Camberley

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for the two years' curriculum of study in January, 1903.

These two years were certainly among the most instructive and pleasant that I can recall, for the work was of great interest and comprehensive, covering the entire gamut of activities required of Staff officers in all departments of the service. The instructional staff and students consisted largely of officers of wide experience who, between them, had soldiered and fought in well-nigh every part of His Majesty's Dominions, and beyond. They could thus advance first-hand knowledge of conditions obtaining throughout the Empire, and many places besides. Probably in no other one military community at the time, therefore, did there exist such a diversity of knowledge and experience of military affairs as among the seventy or eighty officers who comprised the staff and students at Camberley. It was an education in itself to be associated for two continuous years with men of all branches of the service, few of whom had not done something of note before entering the Staff College, but who realized, nevertheless, that they had a great deal yet to learn, and were bent on doing so.

Many of my contemporaries at Camberley were destined to distinguish themselves greatly in the European War; and of the instructional staff, Generals Rawlinson, Haking, Hubert Gough, Kiggell, Capper and Aston immediately spring to the mind; whilst of fellow-students so many have risen to eminence since that a record of their names would occupy much space. In any case, numbers of mere captains of 1903 and 1904 at Camberley emerged from the war as Major- and Lieut.-Generals, and have since occupied positions of high responsibility and trust.

Lord Roberts, who had somewhat unceremoniously been removed from Commander-in-Chief to the Forces, on the introduction of the Army Council a short while

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before, was now residing at Ascot; and often visited the College informally, sometimes also accompanying his daughters at meetings of the College Drag, and usually attending our Point-to-Point Races. Another fairly frequent visitor was the late Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, then a major at the War Office, who several times took part with the Directing Staff in the "pow-wows" held during Staff rides away from the College. He was always bright and sparkling in his criticisms, and a *persona grata* with all, by reason of his never-failing cheeriness and quick Irish wit. Yet one did not always feel sure that his judgment was sound, perhaps because the Irish temperament is often credited with a tendency to volatility.

I was agreeably surprised, towards the end of 1904, to receive a most friendly letter from a distinguished officer at the W.O., whom I had never met, asking if I would like an appointment in the Colonial and Strategical Branch under him, on passing out of the College. The work was one that would have been after my own heart; but I was placed in a quandary from the fact that, by the approved recommendations of the Lyall Committee in 1894, if I returned to India I would shortly qualify for a considerably higher pension on retiring than then normally obtainable in the British service. I had now nearly eighteen years' service, all of which was reckoned as Indian, since my African expeditions were regarded as such by arrangement between the Foreign and India Offices; so another two years spent in India would make me eligible for a much enhanced pension ultimately.

I represented my position in writing, and received a most courteous reply, acknowledging the force of my point of view; and suggesting that, if at the end of two years I did not find myself suitably employed in India, there might perhaps be an opening for me at the W.O. then. And so I returned to India early in 1905; but I

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sometimes think, by the light of after events, that I made a serious mistake in declining the appointment held out to me. Apart from other considerations, the British Army pensions since the Great War have been raised almost to the level of Indian, for full colonels—a measure never imagined as remotely possible when I was torn by conflicting emotions with the W.O. offer before me.

However, I found myself posted to the Meerut Division of the Military Works on reaching Bombay; and when reporting at the former station was given charge of Delhi, Muttra and Agra as my particular care, with my headquarters at Delhi. This entailed my living at an hotel, but on the approach of the hot weather a move to Agra was sanctioned, and there I settled down in the Garrison Engineer's fine big bungalow immediately opposite the Club, where I had my meals. The Agra Club had some residential quarters which were occupied by a number of cheery officers, extra-regimentally employed, who added much to the gaiety of life during the long-drawn-out hot weather.

There appeared to be an unwritten law at this period that R.E.'s returning to India from the Staff College must put in a good spell of Military Works before they could expect to be given Staff employ. Why, I never understood. At all events, such was my fate for nearly two years, though I have perhaps little cause to complain since my lot was cast in pleasant places, and much occurred to make Agra unusually attractive throughout the two cold weathers spent there.

During my previous residence in India I had once before paid a fleeting visit to Delhi and Agra from Lucknow; and had been greatly impressed by the relics of Mogul splendour in the forts at both places, as also by the peerless purity of the Taj by moonlight, and the nobility of the dead sandstone city of Futtehpore Sikri.

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That trip of ten days' leave had been of supreme interest; and now all these marvels lay at one's door, so to speak. The rare beauty of buildings in sandstone and white marble, their unique carvings, dazzling mosaics, tracery-work marble screens, and a hundred and one other objects of wonder around, could thus be surveyed at leisure, and more completely absorbed than on my former sight-seeing dash. Stirring associations with Mutiny days likewise confronted one almost at every turn, as one wandered among them whilst performing the prosaic round of the Military Works' routine at both Agra and Delhi.

One of my sisters joined me from England in October, and we set up house in my spacious bungalow, where we were able to entertain a number of visitors throughout the cold weather. Some were total strangers from overseas, but the wonders of Agra drew many travellers thither; and we thus made a host of new friends, of whom not a few have endured through the intervening years.

Unlike the Punjab, much good shooting was obtainable in the neighbourhood of Agra and Delhi, chiefly black-buck and chinkara in the way of big game, and duck, snipe and partridge for our guns. Thus many jolly week-ends in pursuit of sport provided variety and relaxation from office work; whilst a party of us spent several most interesting days in the native state of Jaipur, one of the beauty spots in Rajputana, noted for its massive fort standing on a great rocky bluff overlooking an extensive cliff-girt lake. We were shown over the scrupulously clean well-kept town by Rai Bahadur Ganpat Rai, the polished and charming chief of the State Transport, which had several times been on service; and had tea one afternoon with him in a beautiful garden he had created in the desert to resemble reaches of the upper Thames, which had appealed to him forcibly during a visit to England.

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Agra also received a farewell visit from Lord Curzon about this time, and we members of the Agra Club entertained him at a dinner on the eve of his departure for England. He then made one of the most moving and impressive speeches I have heard, for he seemed to feel deeply the close of his connection with Agra, where he had laboured devotedly during his viceroyalty to preserve, and restore, many of the priceless relics of Mogul days, which were threatened with decay and, but for his timely intervention, would rapidly have deteriorated much in beauty. The first Lady Curzon accompanied him on this visit, and was universally acclaimed as the most beautiful and queenly-looking vicereine that had ever occupied that position.

The New Year of 1906 was rendered memorable at Agra by the visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, now our Gracious Majesties; and to do them honour a sumptuous camp was erected by my old friend "Chips" Smallwood, of the Ordnance, near the Circuit House. A large Garden Party was attended by our royal visitors in the grounds at Sikandra, the tomb of Akbar the Great, some 5 miles outside Agra; while on another occasion an Investiture was held by the Prince in a huge shamiana within the precincts of the fort, after dinner. An immense concourse of Indian notabilities, as well as officers and ladies of the garrison, were present at this great reception; and the beautiful decorations and electric light effects installed for the function converted the interior of the fort into a veritable fairyland that night.

The latter end of March, 1906, saw my sister and me bound for the little hill-station of Ranikhet, beyond Naini Tal, and there we occupied a small bungalow throughout the summer months. I, personally, welcomed the change, for our fresh surroundings were beautiful, and it was getting very hot when we left Agra.

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The Rifle Brigade, 60th Rifles, and a Standing Camp of details comprised the entire garrison, but it proved a delightfully sociable place. Major-General Spens, of racquets and cricket renown, was an ideal General to work under, as he and his wife were extremely hospitable and popular; while I was more than fortunate in my immediate superior, Colonel P. E. Dixon, R.E. The views of the snows from Ranikhet and Chaubuttia, a high ridge close by, were glorious beyond description after the rains, so near and towering did they appear, the most prominent peak, Trisul, being over 23,000 feet and Nanda Devi little short of 26,000 feet, above sea level, whereas our altitude was in the neighbourhood of 7,000 only.

Soon after our arrival at Ranikhet, I was greatly surprised and pleased to hear from the Council of the Royal Geographical Society that I had been awarded the Cuthbert Peek Grant for the year 1906, in recognition of "the high geographical value of your various expeditions between 1891 and 1901." I was asked at the same time what form I would like the award to take; and in response to my request for a gold watch and chain, received a handsome half-hunter, which has kept most excellent time ever since; whilst within its back is artistically inscribed:

"Royal Geographical Society; Cuthbert Peek Grant for 1906, Awarded to Major H. H. Austin, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.E., for explorations 1897–1901, in the Sobat Region, Lake Rudolf and British East Africa."

I had almost made up my mind that I was to winter at Ranikhet when I received orders in November to return to Agra. The Amir of Afghanistan was to visit that place shortly, en route to Calcutta, shepherded by Sir Henry MacMahon; and a Grand Review was to be held for his benefit a few miles outside cantonments, together with other functions during his stay. A large

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number of additional troops were to assemble at Agra for the purpose, and these had to be provided with camps about the station, and a metalled road constructed to the review ground.

Thus we of the Military Works were kept pretty busy and anxious, and my good friend Colonel E. Blunt, the C.R.E. of the Meerut Division, paid frequent visits to Agra to see that all was proceeding satisfactorily. So there was no relaxation of strain until our illustrious visitor, the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener, and their entourage, as well as the big influx of troops and sight-seers from other stations, had departed, and Agra resumed its normal calm. Still, the visit of so unique a personage as the absolute Ruler of Afghanistan to Agra was the experience of a lifetime; and my sister and I were fortunate to be present on so rare an occasion.

Habibulla Khan proved a most amiable and intelligent guest of the Government of India, however, whilst at Agra; and took the keenest interest in, and asked many questions concerning, the troops, their equipment, and so on. Indeed, he was with difficulty restrained from soaring aloft in a captive balloon, which he almost insisted on doing, much to the consternation of the gilded staff. His tour in India evidently appealed to him enormously, and he seemed very loth, from all accounts, to leave the glories and gaieties of Calcutta, for he dallied long before setting forth again for the wilds of Afghanistan, his unruly subjects, and the doubtful joys of Government at Kabul. In fact, one gathered, he had almost to be pushed out of India!

As my sister was shortly leaving for England, we did not set up house again at Agra on our return from Ranikhet; but by arrangement with the Club had our meals in the Ladies' Room, whilst living as before in the bungalow across the road. Colonel (now Major-General) Nigel Woodyatt was then residing at the Agra Club, in

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connection with the Amir's coming visit, and decided to join us at table. We were delighted to have his company, as he kept us continuously amused by tales of his strange experiences before entering the Army; particularly when, as a noted North Country sprinter, he was often beset by toughs who had their money on somebody else. The dirty tricks in which they indulged, even to waylaying and stretching Woodyatt out, to render him out of the running, were highly diverting as related, though probably anything but funny to him at the time they occurred. This was the commencement of a long friendship, for I was to see much of Woodyatt during subsequent years; and now, curiously enough, we live, in retirement, within a few miles of each other, so often meet.

After two years spent in the Military Works, I at length received a Staff appointment, being transferred from Agra early in the spring of 1907 as D.A.Q.M.G., Eastern Command, at Naini Tal. It was very wintry and cold when I arrived, and there were but few residents in the Club then; but we were made extremely comfortable by that prince of Club secretaries, the late Major Jay Gould of the A.V.S., one of the best-natured fellows that ever stepped, despite his somewhat foppish appearance on first acquaintance, though a noted strong man in India.

A few weeks later I was deputed to examine a batch of students in Field Fortification at the Indian Staff College, recently opened at Deolali, near Bombay; so travelled down there to make myself acquainted with its environments, before setting a practical outdoor scheme. My old friend "Tommy" Capper, whom I first knew as adjutant of the East Lancashire Regiment at Lucknow, in 1893–94, and then as one of my instructors at the Staff College, Camberley, was now Commandant of the Indian Staff College, with the rank of

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Brig.-General; and he very kindly put me up during my stay. Ridley Boileau, my best pal, then married to a charming lady and the father of three sturdy sons, was also on the instructional staff; and as several of his colleagues and a number of the students, including S. H. Sheppard, were among my former friends and acquaintances there, I spent several very enjoyable days at Deolali.

Though the topographical features of the country round were well adapted for purposes of a Staff College course, possessing plains, hills, woods, streams, and the sea near at hand, the climatic conditions of Deolali were not favourable for strenuous mental and physical activities throughout the whole year. The damp heat at certain seasons proved extremely enervating to the staff, students and their families; but the Staff College at Deolali was only a temporary measure, existing huts and barracks being utilized for the purpose pending the construction of suitable buildings at Quetta, then in hand. These were nearing completion, and before many months the present admirable Staff College at Quetta was occupied, and Deolali reverted to its former status as a Rest Camp for outward and homeward bound troops.

On my return to Naini Tal, I entered into partnership with Major (now Major-General) C. E. Norie for the purchase of a centre-board sailing boat. Although Norie had lost an arm at the shoulder during the Tirah Campaign, he was still pretty handy with the one left, so we had many a pleasant sail together on the lake in the *Shamrock*, or *Upset-me-not*, as she was facetiously dubbed, because she was particularly broad in the beam. Though comparatively slow, she was, at least, sure, and certainly never turned turtle with us aboard, in the treacherous gusts that come hurtling down through the gaps in the hills encompassing the deep lake, a common fate of far fleeter competitors in the yacht races that

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were so attractive a feature of this unique Himalayan resort.

But I was not destined to remain in Staff employ for long at sociable little Naini Tal; for early in June it was decided that the Eastern Command was to be abolished. I saw unpleasant visions of having to return to the Military Works, since few Staff vacancies were said to be available, owing to reductions. After a period of considerable anxiety, however, orders eventually arrived directing me to proceed to Army Headquarters at Simla, where an appointment as D.A.Q.M.G. in the Intelligence Department awaited me.

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CHAPTER XIX

AT INDIAN ARMY HEADQUARTERS

There was formerly a tradition attached to holding an appointment in Simla that those who had once tasted the sweets of office at Indian Army Headquarters, almost invariably manœuvred themselves back there again into some billet. In any case, I can recall certain officers of the Indian Army who spent the greater part of their service among the Olympic gods, from the time they were subalterns, or junior captains, and rose to dizzy heights by so doing. Protracted residence in Simla was never my lot, though it was my privilege to try and serve my country fairly continuously there from now onwards until near the close of 1911.

There are obviously many attractions in being in the swim, as it were, and possessing first-hand knowledge of the why and wherefore of decisions regarding the administration, and other matters affecting the army in India. Moreover, one is brought into close contact with many distinguished people, both in the civil and military hierarchy; and one generally retains happy recollections of such intercourse with the Mighty Ones, while chewing the cud of memory when committed to the languor of retirement.

During my connection now with Simla, two Viceroys reigned at Viceregal Lodge, Lords Minto and Hardinge; two Commanders-in-Chief dispensed hospitality from Snowdon, Lord Kitchener and Sir O'Moore Creagh, while their respective Chiefs of Staff were General Sir

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Beauchamp Duff (afterwards Commander-in-Chief himself), and General Sir Douglas Haig. How the latter won immortality as the undaunted British Commander-in-Chief in France, is now a matter of history; and his doughty championship of the consideration due to the sad plight of ex-officers and men, cast on the Nation's Charity after the Great War, through no fault of their own, will never be forgotten.

I found myself placed in charge of the Persian Section in the Intelligence Branch, knowing little or nothing about the country, or its language; so set to work to glean some information on the subject by reading voluminous files, and engaged a *munshi* to teach me Persian between breakfast and office hours. Thus I gradually became *au fait* with the conditions obtaining in those regions, which I hoped to visit during my next leave, due the following spring.

The social life at Simla remained much the same as when I held an appointment there thirteen years before; but perhaps rather more so in my case, as I was elected a Knight of the Order of the Black Hearts, its qualification being that members must be bachelors, or "not living in open matrimony." Knighthood was much sought after by unmarried males, as we entertained a great deal throughout the Simla season, our monthly "revels" consisting chiefly of dinners and dances in the Club covered tennis court, which held about 200 people; whilst we usually wound up with a grand Fancy Dress Ball in the Town Hall, to which practically the whole of Simla Society were bidden, so some 800 guests generally joined in the final "revel." We were thus able to return in some measure the kind hospitality extended to us by Simla residents, for Black Heart functions were extremely popular. They were nearly always attended by the Viceroy and Lady Minto, and their charming daughters, all of whom danced assiduously; but I cannot recall Lord

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Kitchener taking the floor except in the State Lancers, though I have good reason to believe the movement had his entire sympathy, since two of his A.D.C.'s were Black Hearts.

The curtain rung down on the season, winter normally saw much snow fall at Simla, so tobogganing on tea-trays, and other rather more up-to-date contrivances, was often possible; while quite good skating could be had by flooding two large tennis courts some way down the northern side of the Ridge, where the ice was sheltered from the midday sun by tall spreading trees. Such a winter at these altitudes was a veritable tonic after the whirl of the season; and one almost resented the intrusion on our peaceful secluded existence when the spring-time heralded the return of scores of officials and clerks, and hundreds of visitors were seen swarming up the hill by train and tonga, to escape the heat in the plains, thus filling the hotels and bungalows, crowding the roads, and jostling us winter residents in a manner that was almost more than could be borne with equanimity. Such sensations, of course, soon vanished, for right glad we really were to welcome back many familiar faces and good friends, who were certain to add to the fun and gaiety of yet another Simla season.

Personally, I was off shortly after the inrush of 1908 commenced, as eight months' combined leave had been sanctioned me. I had intended to travel through Persia, make my way to Baghdad, cross by the desert route thence to Damascus, and so home. But for some Red Tape reason, the Indian Foreign Department feared that the susceptibilities of the Turks might thereby be offended, since they had lately taken exception to Englishmen from India visiting Mesopotamia. So that was the end of that scheme. As I had no wish to spend the whole of my leave in England, however, I decided to return to India by the Trans-Siberian Railway, "do" the

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Manchurian battle-fields, see something of Korea and Japan, continue by sea to Ceylon, and back by rail from Tuticorin, near the southern extremity of India, to Simla in the Himalayas.

Accordingly, I left Simla in April, reaching England by the overland route from Marseilles early in May; and after a delightful summer at home set forth on my Far Eastern travels on August 29th. Since my experiences on this trip have already appeared in *A Scamper through the Far East*, published by Edward Arnold in 1909, I propose merely to summarize my four months' trek of 20,000 miles from London to Simla by the routes followed.

Crossing from Dover to Ostend, the Nord Express conveyed me thence to St. Petersburg; but only a few hours were spent there in sight-seeing before I pushed on to Moscow, where I was the guest of my Old Cliftonian schoolfellow, H. M. Grove, the British Consul. Under his ægis I saw much of this then strikingly beautiful city, the Kremlin, new Cathedral, and so forth, leaving by the Trans-Siberian Express on the evening of September 2nd. The 5,000-mile journey across Russia and the Siberian steppes was full of interest, and very comfortable; but on reaching Harbin, ten days from Moscow, I had to change into a less well-equipped southward-bound train, while the express continued to Vladivostok.

Several days at Mukden in a small Japanese inn enabled me, through the good offices of the British Consul-General, Mr. Willis, to see a great deal of the city and its environments, the contents of the Emperor's Palace, the Northern Tombs of the Emperors, and so forth, before my departure for Dalny. Thence I continued to Port Arthur, where the Japanese kindly placed an English-speaking interpreter at my disposal, and he conducted me over all the scenes of the furious fighting

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during the siege of that fortress four years earlier, as well as the neighbouring Nanshan battle-field.

At Port Arthur I heard that Major-General R. G. Broadwood, commanding at Hongkong, had arrived at Mukden with his A.D.C., Captain Heathcote, in order to visit the battle-fields; so Mr. Nishikawa and I proceeded north to join them, making a brief survey of the Te-li-ssu, Ta-shih-chiao and Liao-yang battle-fields en route. The remainder of the tour was carried out with the General and his staff officer, and most delightful companions they proved; whilst both Chinese and Japanese officials did all in their power to ensure the General's visit being a success. This, of course, was greatly to my advantage also; for, besides having every facility placed before us to explore the battle-fields, we attended many most interesting social functions, which added much to the pleasure of the trip.

The Sha-ho and Mukden battle-fields inspected, several others were traversed by us on our way to the Yalu; and after a complete survey of that area, we bade adieu to the faithful Mr. Nishikawa when we entered the coveted kingdom of Korea on October 3rd. Here we spent a week at Ping-yang and Seoul before sailing from Fusan across the Straits of Tsu-shima—the scene of the memorable naval battle between the Russian Baltic Fleet and the united Navy of Japan. On arrival at Shimonoseki, I parted from General Broadwood and Heathcote, who were returning to Hongkong, whereas I had planned six weeks' travel in Japan prior to sailing for India.

I made my headquarters with the late Colonel Boger, an old Staff College friend and then Military Attaché at Tokio, through whose kindly assistance, and that of a Mrs. Pocklington who had resided for some years in the country, I saw most of the well-known beauty spots in Japan. I made, moreover, some delightful walking tours through the highlands, amid the most gorgeous autumnal

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colourings, and accompanied usually by one Japanese coolie alone; for I had acquired a slight smattering of the language, thanks to the instruction of a Japanese gentleman during my journey across Siberia, so felt able to wander off on my own, putting up at little inns away from the beaten track.

Boger had arranged with the Japanese authorities that I should accompany him on the Grand Manœuvres, being held at Nara in the middle of November, and at which the Emperor was to be present. This memorable experience virtually brought my sojourn in Japan to a close, for after one final jaunt of five or six days to Amano-hashidate and Lake Biwa from Kyoto, I sailed from Kobe on the evening of November 23rd for Colombo, in the North-German Lloyd steamer *Prinz Ludwig* of 10,000 tons.

A small steamer conveyed me from Colombo to Tuticorin, whence I travelled by train to Simla. So ended my delightful and instructive holiday. Vast tracts of country previously unvisited by me had been traversed, and many fresh races seen amid their normal surroundings during this four months' tour.

The remainder of the winter and the ensuing summer varied little from preceding ones, save that this was Lord Kitchener's last season at Simla; and on August 20th a grand farewell banquet was given to him by members of the U.S. Club, and attended by Lord Minto and most of the notabilities in the place. In the course of Sir Beauchamp Duff's valedictory speech he announced that Lord Kitchener had been created a Field-Marshal on laying down the Commander-in-Chiefship, an announcement that was greeted with loud cheers. And this was not the only farewell dinner, for shortly after another was given to Sir Beauchamp, the retiring Chief of Lord Kitchener's staff, who was proceeding to England to take over the duties of Military Secretary at the India

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Office, vice Sir O'Moore Creagh, appointed Commander-in-Chief in India.

India's new Chief Staff Officer was General Sir Douglas Haig, who had been sent out to introduce the recently approved General Staff scheme, which was to come into force in India on the same lines as in England; and thus Sir Douglas became in reality India's first Chief of the General Staff. Sir O'Moore and Lady Creagh, and Sir Douglas and the Hon. Lady Haig took up their residence in Simla during the autumn before Army Headquarters actually moved down to the plains; and it was my privilege then to meet the Haigs for the first time. I had previously met the Creaghs at Aden, where Sir O'Moore was commanding at the time of the return of the Macdonald Expedition to England from Africa ten years before.

Army Headquarters had for some time past been much concerned with the state of affairs in the Persian Gulf, where gun-running was being carried out to an almost alarming extent by Afghans. Since a considerable proportion of these modern magazine rifles eventually found their way from the Gulf into the hands of our trans-frontier tribesmen, it was patent that to permit the traffic in arms to continue unchecked might seriously jeopardize our position on the North-West Frontier. The trouble was that Masqat had developed into the arms emporium of the Middle East, as their importation to that port from Europe was not prohibited. On the contrary, it was encouraged by the Sultan, who received commissions on all arms landed there, and added materially to his revenue by this trade.

The result was that large numbers of modern rifles, and quantities of ammunition, were imported by various merchants, European and native, to be openly exhibited in their gun-shops for purchase by anyone prepared to pay the price demanded, which brought in handsome

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profits to the vendors. Since most Arabs, Persians, Afghans, Baluchis and Pathans regard a good rifle as of little less value than their lives, they readily purchased them in Masqat; for they, the Afghans particularly, realized that they, too, in their turn, could secure a profit of perhaps 200 per cent., by conveying the arms in dhows to the Persian coast opposite, and transporting them thence on camels to promising markets in distant Kabul, Herat and along the Indian border. Thus the traffic in arms during recent years had increased by leaps and bounds; and it was estimated by the Intelligence Department in Simla that probably some 30,000 rifles had found their way from the Gulf to Afghanistan in the cold season of 1908–9. As it was conjectured that many of these would ultimately reach the hands of tribesmen on our frontier, it is clear a very dangerous situation would arise if the flow were not stemmed.

Unfortunately the French, who also possessed Treaty rights at Masqat, did not see their way at that time to co-operate with us in declaring Masqat a prohibited port, by arrangement with the Sultan; and as Great Britain was most directly threatened by this trade, she decided to take action unaided in order to put a stop to it. The difficulties were considerable; for, as matters stood, the importation of arms could not be forbidden, nor could they be seized in the Sultan's dominions, or at sea within the 3-mile limit of his coast-line. Strictly speaking, also, they could not be captured in Persian territory, for Persia had placed no embargo on the purchase and landing of arms from Masqat. Thus the chief chance of success lay in capturing the arms during their transit in dhows from the Arabian coast to the Persian—largely a matter of luck up to the present, for the few blockading ships available. This is apparent when it is stated that the gun-runners were men of great courage, cunning and resource, and had some 350 miles of coast-line open to

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them, whereon the arms carried in dhows could be landed during the hours of darkness.

Hence a really ambitious scheme for the checkmating of the gun-runners' activities throughout the cold weather of 1909–10 was decided upon by the Government of India; and in November, 1909, I was despatched from Simla to the Gulf in my new capacity as Naval Intelligence Officer, to Admiral Sir Edmond Slade, Commanding the East Indies Squadron. My headquarters were to be at the Indo-European Telegraph Station at Jashk, where a wireless installation was erected soon after my arrival. By this means I could communicate to blockading cruisers all information gained by me from secret-service agents, both on the Arabian and Persian coasts, regarding the sailing of dhows from the small port at Matrah, near Masqat, and their likely destinations on the Biaban and Makran coast-line of Persia, in the hope of their being intercepted at sea.

An account of my experiences during the four months I remained in the Gulf has already appeared in *Blackwood's*, in 1920; and the subject has been dealt with more recently still in *Gun-running in the Gulf, and Other Adventures*, published by John Murray in 1926. I refrain, therefore, from going over old ground again, and merely add that this new venture proved one of supreme interest to me, for I was brought into close contact with the senior service, while our wits were continuously pitted against as wily and crafty a set of rogues as probably sail the seas.

I was relieved from my duties at Jashk by Captain (now Brig.-General) S. G. Craufurd, D.S.O., of the Gordon Highlanders, a friend of Staff College days at Camberley, and left for Simla again on March 27th, in the cruiser *Proserpine*, which landed me at Masqat. Two pleasant days were spent by me at the British Consulate with R. E. Holland, a fellow Black Heart of the summer before, and

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I sailed by slow mail for Karachi, calling in at Chahbar and Pasni en route, and eventually reached my Himalayan home on April 4th.

There had been a considerable number of changes in the personnel at Army Headquarters during my absence in the Gulf; many old familiar faces had departed, and fresh ones taken their place under the new régime. But the Simla life soon resumed its usual sociability; and it is with gratitude I mention that I had a standing invitation from Sir Douglas and Lady Haig to tennis every Wednesday afternoon at their house, Holly Lodge, of which I freely availed myself.

I was raised this season, too, to the dignity of Prelate of the Black Hearts, and thus made responsible for the issue of all invitations to our "revels"—no light task in one's leisure moments after office hours. Still, it was all in the day's work, and I don't think the Order suffered from any remissness on my part during the gaieties of this summer.

Once again I was destined to spend but a part of the winter of 1910–11 in Simla; for soon after Christmas I was deputed to make a tour of the North-East Frontier of India. Much of my early service in India, as already related, had been passed in regions contiguous to the North-West Frontier, and I could claim to have traversed considerable areas extending from the Khyber to Quetta. Yet, of the North-East Frontier I possessed no personal experience whatever, my nearest approach to it being the month spent at Mandalay in 1891 before I was whisked off to British East Africa to take part in the preliminary survey for the Uganda Railway.

Events along the North-East Frontier now, however, were beginning to assume a certain significance, owing to the unostentatious, though insidious, penetration by Chinese troops into the wild regions of the Mekong-Salween divide—beyond what had hitherto been recog-

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nized as the agreed frontier between the Chinese Empire and British Burma. This frontier had never been accurately demarcated in those incredibly forbidding wastes; and in order to counter possible future claims of the Chinese to this territory—by virtue of their unchallenged occupation of it—the Government of India decided to despatch a force, early in January, 1911, from Myitkyina on the Irrawaddy, in Upper Burma, eastwards to Pienma, where Chinese inroads were reported.

It so happened that at this time there was no officer with quite recent North-East Frontier experience in the Intelligence Department at Simla; and as Burma came within the scope of the various countries with which I had been dealing of late, I was directed to proceed to Myitkyina, and elsewhere, in order to absorb information on the spot, as it were. This tour involved a journey of some 8,000 miles by rail, road, sea and river, between the middle of January and middle of March, 1911; and proved most instructive to me, though I was denied permission to join the Pienma Expeditionary Column in its adventurous march through practically unknown country of the wildest possible description. Still, some account of the regions visited may interest those who possess but scant knowledge of the tracts over which I travelled.

Anticipating a little, my heart was much rejoiced on arrival in Calcutta by the receipt of a cable from my father in England, forwarded to me from Simla. It was brief, and to the point, consisting of the one word, "Congratulations." I trusted it meant that I had been awarded a brevet-lieut.-colonelcy for my services in the Gulf during the previous winter; and so it proved, for whilst in Burma I received several letters from my colleagues at Simla congratulating me on my promotion.

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CHAPTER XX

A NORTH-EAST FRONTIER TOUR

Leaving Simla on January 17th, 1911, the 1,100-mile journey to Calcutta was broken by me at Rurki, where I spent two days with the Twinings, he now being the Commandant of the Bengal Sappers and Miners there; and with them I paid a most interesting visit to the pilgrimage city of Hardwar, on the Ganges. On arrival at Calcutta I was joined by Major Melville, the Civil Surgeon at Simla, who considered he could not better utilize a month's holiday than in accompanying me during the Burmese part of my tour; so we sailed together for Rangoon, reaching that port in the early morning of the 27th after a calm voyage.

We naturally visited the Shwe Dagon pagoda, and other places of note before continuing by train for Mandalay, where it was my good fortune to be the guest of Colonel and Mrs. Grant. He, it may be remembered, won the V.C. at Manipur some twenty-one years previously as a young subaltern, when his gallant exploit resounded throughout the Empire. Considerable changes were apparent about Mandalay, as the great reduction in the garrison since I was stationed there had adversely affected the prosperity of the place; and a somewhat sleepy atmosphere pervaded the precincts of Fort Dufferin, as compared with twenty years before. The external surroundings remained much the same, however; and the view from the summit of Mandalay Hill was as beautiful as ever, though one missed the

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PAGODA AND KYAUNG (MONASTERY), MANDALAY.

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stately, white "Incomparable Pagoda" at its base, which had been destroyed by fire in the interval. Thebaw's palace and grounds within the fort yet retained their attractions of yore, and were still put to use as a charming Officers' Club.

Our sojourn in Mandalay extended to two days only, and we then took train to the more modern cantonment of Maymyo, situated on a plateau 3,500 feet above sea level, and distant about 42 miles from Thebaw's former capital. The open rolling grasslands, and climate, rendered Maymyo more English in appearance than any station previously visited by me in the East; but after twenty-four hours spent here we pressed on to the Burma Military Police station at Lashio, the terminus of the railway towards the Chinese frontier, and distant about 140 miles from Maymyo.

We broke the journey, however, at the Goekteik Gorge, which is one of the wonders of Upper Burma, 41 miles from Maymyo, as I wished to see something of the magnificent iron viaduct that spans a striking rift in the hills. The graceful slender structure is not very short of half a mile in length, and is supported on lofty lattice trestles resting on massive concrete bases. At its centre the gorge is nearly 900 feet deep; but by a curious freak of nature the torrent at the bottom plunges through a subterranean passage at the site of the bridge, the tallest trestle required being thereby reduced to a trifle under 350 feet in height. Some 500 feet beneath the foundation of this iron trellis-work pier, the seething stream enters a vast cavern, whose roof and floor are studded with great stalactites and stalagmites, and rock ferns. Though the entrance to the cave is not more than 40 or 50 feet wide, its vaulted roof in the centre seemed to rise 200 feet above the level of the torrent, which swirled into the gloom by a series of cascades and rapids before disappearing through a low noisome tunnel at the far

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end of the cave on its ghostly subterranean course. Around us flitted bats innumerable, adding to the eeriness of the spot as daylight closed in.

The train took 2¼ minutes crossing the viaduct next day, immediately on leaving this small roadway station; and I confess that, looking out of the carriage window down that almost sheer drop of 900 feet to where the torrent disappeared underground produced a very creepy sensation; and it was quite a relief to reach firm footing again on the other side. Soon we were traversing fine rolling grasslands interspersed with wooded areas, cleared here and there for primitive Shan habitations, and patches of cultivation, before darkness descended and we reached our night's destination at Hsipaw, about 7.30 p.m.

Reaching the railway terminus at Lashio at noon next day, we at once took a tonga for the 2-mile drive to the Burma Police cantonment, which is set among pleasant surroundings. Rolling grasslands, studded with magnificent trees, stretched away to the hills some miles distant; while the austere brick walls of the small fort, with its bastions and barbed-wire fencing outside, alone reminded one that here we were on the outskirts of Empire, so cosy were the bungalows around, with their bright, well-kept gardens. A cheery little Club House, too, afforded amenities to the four or five officers and officials who held this advanced position on the road to the Salween and China, less than 50 miles distant at Mong Kyet, with the Kunlon Ferry beyond.

The men of the garrison entrusted with the task consisted of Sikhs, Gurkhas and Punjabi Mahommedans, many of these stalwarts having enlisted for service far from their homes in the Punjab and elsewhere, attracted, no doubt, by the better pay offered them than that obtainable in the regular Indian Army. Comparing the climate and environments of Lashio with the majority

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of stations in India, however, there seemed little cause to condole with these warriors on their exile to this remote corner of our Eastern Empire; for Lashio is some 3,000 feet above sea level, and thus never unbearably hot like the burning plains of the Punjab in the summer months.

From this point we returned by the same route to Mandalay, where, for old sake's sake, we devoted one day after snipe. Unaware of the fact, we hit by mischance on an area up the Madya Canal which had been shot over the day before by the Commissioner. Consequently, though birds were still fairly plentiful, they proved exceedingly wild; so we gathered less than twenty couple as the result of the day's shikar. Nevertheless, we thoroughly enjoyed the outing, and obtained all the exercise we needed while floundering about the paddy-fields, with water well above the knee in many places.

From Mandalay we now crossed by ferry steamer to Sagaing, on the right bank of the Irrawaddy; and there took train for Myitkyina, situated some 350 miles north up the river, by rail. Much variety of scenery exists in this stretch of country, great areas of paddy-fields, thickly wooded tracts, enclosed by timbered heights, and again well cultivated plains; while yet again occur dense teak forests, regions of bananas, bamboos, and so forth, as one speeds onwards in the territory of the wild Kachins —strange and interesting types of humanity, and more picturesque than the Shans seen during the Lashio trip.

Although barely 1,000 feet above the sea, Myitkyina in the month of February appeared a very attractive spot, being beautifully placed on the bank of the Irrawaddy, here only 300 or 400 yards wide, and of a sluggish current. Fresh green pastures spread out to the hills around, and fine trees graced the little cantonment; while an excellent polo ground, the Officers' flower-embowered Club, and neat bungalows, enhanced the

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pleasing aspect of the station, notwithstanding the presence of business-like block-houses constructed round it. Owing to the calls of the Pienma Expedition, however, the cantonment was denuded of the bulk of its troops, and a large depot formed some 2½ miles downstream at Waingmaw—across on the left bank of the river—whence supplies were forwarded to the columns operating beyond. Still, I was able to collect much information from the officials left behind, concerning the course of events, and the difficulties experienced by the troops in penetrating the inhospitable regions confronting them.

We left Myitkyina on February 9th in the launch *Brigand*, a small double-decked paddle-boat about 100 feet in length, and drawing 3½ feet of water. There were only two tiny cabins on board, and several other passengers besides ourselves, including a lady and her daughter; so quarters were distinctly cramped during the trip of 135 miles down the Irrawaddy to Bhamo. Compensation for this was found, however, in the beauty and variety of the scenery, and the charming colouring of the foliage; though the lowness of the river at this time of the year made navigation extremely difficult, the several channels requiring frequent buoying. Even then we scraped the gravelly bottom in an ominous manner more than once during the first day; and finally ran hard and fast aground just before sunset. We were more than an hour getting off again, and had to complete the remainder of that day's stage by moonlight.

Next day our native skipper went one better still, for, shortly before noon he succeeded in putting us immovably ashore on a sandbank near the village of Sinbo. In spite of getting out anchors, and trying to kedge the ship off, she steadfastly refused to budge; and ultimately we were reduced to signalling for natives on the bank to come to our assistance. After much toil the amphibious

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folk, standing in water up to their waists, and placing their backs and shoulders against the steamer, managed to rock her afloat again. As we had been aground for close on three hours, by the time we made Sinbo it was too late to continue down the upper defile—a short distance below—for steamers were not allowed to leave that calling-place after 3 p.m. if downward bound. Thus we practically lost a day, thanks to our *sarang's* clumsy seamanship.

Off again at 7 a.m., we soon entered the defile. Nearly a mile wide at Sinbo, the Irrawaddy here contracted to something like 70 or 80 yards, and is enclosed between rocky wooded heights, though of comparatively easy slope. Three hours were occupied in traversing the entire length of the defile, which is generally 150 to 200 yards wide, with villages concealed here and there amid the vegetation. On emerging from the defile proper the river broadened out to perhaps 400 yards, until the plains were reached above the confluence of the Taping and Irrawaddy. Bhamo appeared in sight soon after 11 a.m., and half an hour later we arrived at the landing-flats at the south end of the town, along whose river front we must have steamed for close on 2 miles. Owing to the lowness of the Irrawaddy a wide expanse of sand lay uncovered between the bank and the stream, and over this we had to plough our way from the launch to the hard firm ground above.

Whilst walking through the town en route to the Circuit House, the variety of native types, comprising Bhamo's inhabitants, that we met was surprising. Burmese, Chinese, Kachins, Shans, Maingthas, Panthays, Palaungs, Namkhams, and other such tribes, fairly jostled one another, furnishing a strange medley of Mongol humanity that would have been far too difficult to differentiate between had not Melville and I been accompanied by Captain Musgrave of the Indian Army, who

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had spent nearly all his service in Burma and explained their special idiosyncrasies of dress and head-dress. Thus one felt it was an education in this respect alone to have visited Bhamo and its amazing bazaars.

Our second afternoon here was chiefly devoted to preparations for a six days' trip to the Chinese frontier at Kuli-hka and back, on which we were to set forth next morning. The small caravan that left the Circuit House early on February 13th consisted of Melville, Musgrave and myself, our servants, and five sowars of the Military Police in charge of the Burmese ponies provided as mounts for us. The sowars brought two mules for their baggage from the battalion; and for our own requirements we engaged seven Panthay mules, driven by their owners, as we had to carry the food supply of all for the whole time we expected to be away from Bhamo.

The distance to the Chinese frontier at Kuli-hka by the trade route, running from Bhamo to Teng-yueh in Chinese territory, is about 51 miles; and within British limits the track is well kept up, with Rest Houses established at certain stages for the use of European travellers at Mo Mauk, Ka-li-kyet, Kulong-hka and Man-hkwang-hka. As time was short, I decided to make double marches, so our first day's trek took us to Ka-li-kyet, 21 miles from Bhamo. Here we obtained a night's shelter in the Rest House on a high kotal, whence a fine view is to be had while looking north-east towards the valley of the Taping and away to Mara Pum hill, whose summit stood out prominently, since it is 5,500 feet above sea level.

A broad metalled road had led us over the plains in an easterly direction, and we soon entered prettily wooded country where teak, avenues of lofty bamboos, and other growths afforded grateful shade throughout the remainder of the march. Beyond Mo Mauk, a village containing several hundred houses, we bore north-east to reach the

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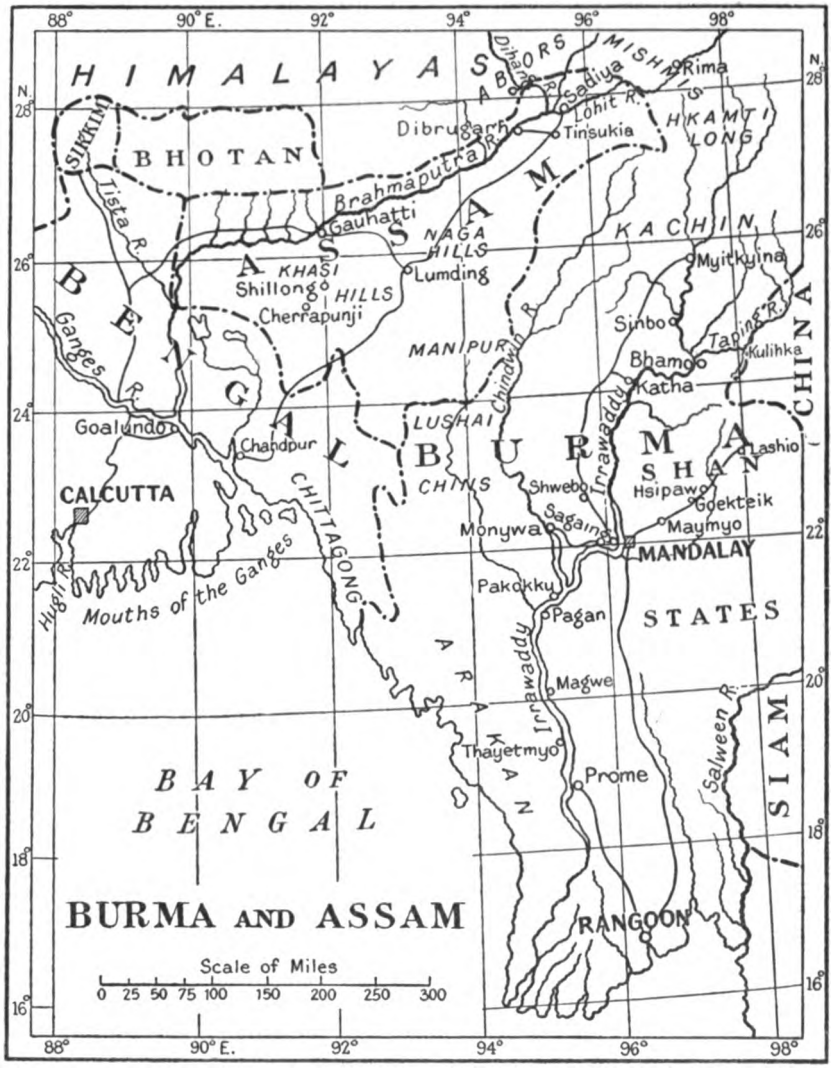

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hills; and crossed the Nanto-bet river, some 17½ miles from Bhamo, by a bridge more than 50 yards in length, beneath which cascades and rapids gave the stream a very turbulent appearance. Thence onwards the metalling ceased, and the track became rough and stony before we reached the long stiff ascent to the Ka-li-kyet Rest House.

Our baggage animals travelled excellently, and accomplished the march in well under seven hours. These Panthay mules seemed to me a particularly docile breed of beast, for they gave no trouble on the road, or while being loaded up. Indeed, they were positively helpful to their masters, and showed no inclination to shirk their work when summoned from their brief graze in the early mornings, to receive their burdens. They would immediately respond to the call, stroll up to their loads, and slip in under their saddles, held aloft by the muleteers, and stand quite still whilst loads were hoisted into position and made fast.

It was a refreshing change from my many previous experiences of the genus mule elsewhere—roaring, ranting brutes, veritable man-eaters and sky-kickers when being loaded, and expert buck-jumpers in divesting themselves of their burdens as soon as led off. Our present Panthay mules, on the other hand, required no leading at the end of a rope, but sedately followed their gaily caparisoned leader, whose tinkling bell seemed to lure them along close in his wake. Thus there was seldom any straggling on the march, and the animals filed after each other in orderly array from start to finish.

Off early in the cool of the morning, with the long and difficult double-stage of 21½ miles to Man-hkwang-hka before us, in less than 3 miles we struck the Taping, here from 50 to 60 yards wide, and flowing swiftly between densely wooded slopes. Soon the scenery became beautiful, and even grand; for the river forced

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its way through lofty forested heights, set closely together and broken by numerous gullies and deep sombre ravines; whilst the track twisted and turned high up along the hill-sides by a skilfully chosen course, sometimes 800 to 1,000 feet above the boisterous stream, and crossing numerous rivulets and mountain torrents, all carefully bridged by the Burma Government. Thus, despite the extraordinarily intricate nature of the terrain, and the switch-back character of the track, our Panthay mules and little Burmese ponies seemed to make light of their burdens, and all were comfortably settled in for the night at Man-hkwang-hka Rest House before 3 p.m.

Our new quarters were perched 150 to 200 feet above the Taping, on the left bank of a deep glen with stream at bottom that rushed down the slopes to join the main foaming torrent below. This constitutes the boundary hereabouts between Burma and China in a north and south direction; but in an easterly one the frontier is not crossed by the track for another 8½ miles. And thither we proceeded next morning accompanied by a couple of sowars, whilst the baggage remained halted at Man-hkwang-hka.

As before, the hill-sides continued terribly broken during this stage, cañons and gullies existing everywhere about us; while the track in places ran along the edge of rocky precipices several hundred feet deep. Just beyond mile 51 from Bhamo we reached the eastern frontier of Burma, the course of the Kuli-hka, a mountain torrent whose waters dashed by a series of rapids to mingle with those of the tumultuous Taping, still some hundreds of feet below the level of the track. The stream was spanned by an iron bridge, 60 to 80 feet in length, and built by the British for the Chinese Government. On crossing it we entered China, to find ourselves confronted with two thatched huts, one of which boasted the title

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of a Trade Protection Levy Post, whilst flying a blue flag adorned with Chinese symbols.

The skallywag garrison of ten men issued forth and seemed at first disposed to challenge our entry into their kingdom; but we soon smoothed away their suspicions by presenting them with cheroots. Before long their complete confidence had been gained, so we continued chatting with them for half an hour or more, through the medium of Musgrave, who spoke their dialect fluently. These defenders of the frontier were, doubtless, shown in the books of the Governor of the Teng-yueh district as fully armed and accoutred, and the allowance made for their upkeep drawn by him. It did not surprise us altogether, however, to perceive that they possessed no uniform whatever; and that the sole armament of the rabble consisted of one rusty old rifle, and an assortment of cartridges, not one of which seemed meant to fit the weird weapon. What the state of the main garrison in their post at Sie-lie was, we had no opportunity of learning by a visit to it; but we could see the fort situated on a high ridge some miles to the north-west, and overlooking the valley of the Taping. It was supposed to contain seventy to eighty Chinese soldiers under an officer—chiefly on paper, I imagine, as our friends did not give one the impression of ever having been inspected since they joined, or were thrust into, the army, to be planked down at this remote corner of the Chinese Empire.

We were back at Man-hkwang-hka in the early afternoon, and resumed the return journey to Bhamo next day, making several détours en route; one to the Tun-hong post, garrisoned by fifty Sikhs, Punjabi Mahommedans and a few Kachins, under the command of a subadar. High above the Taping, the site was a charming one; everything about the place was spotless, and the men looked the picture of health; whilst they were in signalling communication with the next post to

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the north, Alaw Pum, 10 or 12 miles distant as the crow flies; and also with Bhamo, visible some 30 miles away to the south-west through a gap in the hills. The contrast between Chinese and British posts was truly remarkable.

I had intended to travel by steamer from Bhamo to Mandalay, but the low state of the Irrawaddy prevented the Flotilla Company's palatial liners coming so far up-stream. We decided, therefore, to proceed by a ferry boat to Katha, 110 miles down the river, and there take train for Mandalay. Owing to the difficulties of navigation, due to numerous shallows, and the second Irrawaddy defile, we were late in reaching Katha, and the ferry boat had to whistle long and frequently in the dark to keep the train back until we arrived; whereupon a rare scramble ensued to catch it. We had to change again 15 miles on, at Naba Junction, to board the southern mail bound for Mandalay, which entered Sagaing at 10 next morning. We continued by another train for Monywa, an hour and a half later, however, as I wished to see something of the Chindwin River before turning south for Rangoon.

It was very hot when we steamed out of Sagaing, travelling west; and during most of the 65-mile run the country traversed consisted of bare scrub jungle, with occasional groves and pagodas near villages. On approaching the Chindwin its character improved, cultivation became considerable, and numerous toddy plantations were scattered about the plain; while beautiful palms and great spreading trees formed fine avenues in the Civil lines of Monywa near the dâk bungalow. Though the place was the abode of but few Europeans, their bungalows were charming structures, and the compounds a vision of freshness and fertility.

The town of Monywa, too, exceeded our expectations, and was in reality more imposing than Bhamo, for it possessed several fine pagodas, *hpoungi kyoungs* (monas-

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teries), large fruit, fish and vegetable bazaars, and some quite good shops; but it lacked the varied types of humanity that make Bhamo so fascinating. The Chindwin here is not far short of three-quarters of a mile in width, though somewhat sluggish; while the town stretches for the best part of 2 miles along its left bank, and on the hard below many quaint, ornately carved, high-prowed and high-sterned river boats were lying.

Next morning a cargo-steamer arrived from Pakokku on the Irrawaddy, and as she was fitted up with two small canvas cabins for'ard, we decided to travel down-river in her. She completed discharging her cargo, and taking fresh stuff aboard, by the early afternoon, so started off on her return trip about 4.30 p.m. But here again the low state of the river, flowing generally along several tortuous channels between banks often a mile apart, made navigation extremely tricky in spite of careful buoying. Numerous villages existed on the banks, and at one of these, Paungwa, we tied up for the night, while sufficient daylight still remained for us to run ashore and examine a strikingly beautiful pagoda built out on a promontory near by.

The voyage was continued at dawn; but progress was slow and ports of call frequent, for we put in at no less than ten, on one bank or the other, during the 76-mile run to Pakokku from Monywa. Not until 2 p.m., therefore, did we enter the Irrawaddy, its junction with the Chindwin taking place in a flat featureless plain, where the banks of the two rivers enclosed a great area of sand and water seemingly several miles across. Another hour's run brought us at length to the Pakokku landing-stage of an evidently flourishing little town, for three steamers were loading and unloading cargo on to three large flats, moored to the shore. Nevertheless, the cantonment presented a painfully parched and dust-bedecked appearance, owing to lack of rain, as we tramped

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for 1½ miles through inches of dust in front of the bullock-cart bearing our belongings to the dâk bungalow.

It was our good fortune to find that two former Simla friends, Mr. and Mrs. Fell, were living near by, as he was the Deputy Commissioner here. So we saw everything there was to be seen, both in the town and Civil station, for they entertained us most hospitably throughout the whole of the next day. Indeed, we had to depart hastily from a large dinner-party they were giving to the Commissioner of the Magwe district, in order to catch the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's palatial paddle-boat *Java*, which called in at Pakokku on her downward voyage to Prome.

This luxurious steamer was some 350 feet in length, and 45 feet broad between the rails, with a commodious upper deck for passengers. Of these there were only about ten first class, so we each had a roomy cabin to ourselves, and enjoyed all the comforts of a home during the next forty-eight hours' journey of over 270 miles down the Irrawaddy. Though the scenery in these lower reaches of the river cannot be compared with that higher up, as the hill-sides become bare, and the summits of certain ridges and spurs are disfigured with oil-boring shafts, yet we were indulging now in a thoroughly *dolce far niente* existence. Steaming thus down a great waterway has always held a peculiar charm for me, whether it be on the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, or the like. Seldom is there a lack of something to interest one, so long as there is traffic on the waters, and life and habitations on the banks. To these, in the case of the Irrawaddy, is the further attraction of busy gaily-garbed coolies, and pretty daintily-attired females who frequent every landing-stage at which the steamer calls; while the multitude of deck-passengers on these river-liners afford endless opportunities for studying different types of the human race at close quarters.

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I was especially interested when the steamer put in for a short spell at Thayetmyo, the place of my birth. In those distant days, Thayetmyo was an important frontier military station, with a large garrison of British and Indian troops. But its glory had long since departed, and it was now occupied by one company of the East Surrey regiment only. Three others had but a short time before been taken by Colonel Sloman, their C.O. and an old Simla friend, to Shwebo, where I had met him on the station platform in the early morning, clad in pyjamas and dressing gown, on our way down from Naba Junction to Sagaing.

Thus the little cantonment bore a very deserted appearance; the small fort of old days stood silent and forlorn, and much overgrown with grass; while the sites of former capacious, but abandoned, barracks and lines were still more infested with cobras, by report, than in the days of my babyhood. In truth I was somewhat dejected by the signs of decay witnessed around me, and certainly failed to discover "the house where I was born" nearly forty-three years before.

Five hours later our river journey came to an end at Prome, where we arrived at 7 p.m. There we took train again for Rangoon, the 160 miles being traversed during the night, for soon after daylight we reached our port of departure for Calcutta. We sailed that evening, and on arrival at Calcutta on March 2nd, Melville and I parted. He had now to return to his work at Simla; whereas my tour had yet to carry me through Assam to the borders of the Abor and Mishmi country, in which regions, also, the Chinese were displaying considerable activity.

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CHAPTER XXI

ALONG THE ASSAM BORDER

Learning that my train for Goalundo, a settlement some 10 miles below the junction of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, left Calcutta at 5.45 a.m. on March 4th, I hoped to obtain a tolerable night's rest by driving to the station after dinner on the 3rd, and sleeping in the railway-carriage by which I was to travel on the morrow. I had cause to regret my forethought, for what with the mosquitoes and the incessant shunting in the station yard throughout the night, I snatched no sleep at all, and had been persecuted and jolted into an elderly man by dawn, when the train eventually started on its journey.

The 150 miles traversed during the ensuing five hours consisted chiefly of open plains, interspersed with patches of wood and vegetation. The country was well watered by rivers and streams, while the numerous habitations were curious-looking structures of mud and wattle, surmounted by arched roofs of thatch that gave them the appearance of magnified bee-hives. Goalundo itself seemed a somewhat insignificant place, the houses mainly small, mostly with thatched roofs, and scattered without system about the flat bank of the river—here close on three-quarters of a mile wide.

Transferring to the shallow-draught steamer *Baluchi*, we left soon after noon on her 80-mile trip down the Ganges to Chandpur; and within an hour the river had broadened out to something like 2 miles. Throughout the short voyage numerous villages were passed on

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both banks, some out on the open plain reminding me forcibly of Shilluk and Dinka *tukls* on the Nile about Fashoda, and up-stream of that spot. Numbers of country boats and sailing craft were, however, plying their trade on the waters; while the method of fishing employed by the natives was very similar to that of Burmans on the Irrawaddy, whose large nets are attached to the ends of stout poles erected near the bank, which are lowered into the stream and levered up again with unwary fish protesting in their meshes.

The latter part of the trip was carried out in the dark, for Chandpur was not reached until past 7 p.m., and seemed to be situated up a creek abounding with boats and other river vessels. A launch conveyed us to the left bank, where the Assam train was drawn up near by. The Assam-Bengal Railway being of metre gauge, the carriages were not so commodious as those on the main Indian lines; but we travelled through the night sufficiently comfortably to enable me to make up for some of the sleep denied me in the carriage at Calcutta.

By 8 a.m. the following morning the plains had been left behind and we entered upon the hill section of the railway, passing the first of the tea-gardens at Damchira, spread out on the banks of a mountain river to which the line generally adhered as far as the divide. Soon we were winding our way up a narrow gorge with wooded heights to right and left, and the country now became mountainous. So much so that, on reaching Harangajao, a second engine had to be attached to the rear of the train, to assist in overcoming the stiff ascent of 1 in 37 to Jatinga. Here we were at the highest point crossed by the railway, and only attained it after traversing several deep ravines and diving through a number of short tunnels.

Although the northern side of the range, down which we now plunged, was less imposing and picturesque

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than the southern, yet the terrain remained formidable enough to demand many fine bridges across ravines, and the tunnelling of spurs and ridges; while the hill-sides were densely wooded in parts, and in others bamboo thickets and banana groves were a common feature of the landscape. Cotton also appeared to be grown amid these hills; but during the later portion of the section tangled jungle is penetrated before the railway emerges again on to the plains about Lumding.

The train by which I travelled was bound for Dibrugarh, some 34 miles to the west on the Brahmaputra; whereas my immediate destination was Sadiya on the Lohit, above its junction with the former river, and 30 miles still to the north. Disembarking at Tinsukia, therefore, I was only detained half an hour before the local train from Dibrugarh to Talap arrived; and the 21 miles now traversed were almost entirely through tea-gardens. En route we surmounted the noted Dum-Dum plateau, credited with being the spot where tea was first grown in the East. At Talap, 550 miles north of Chandpur, my railway journey temporarily ceased; for though another 9 miles of rail continued north to Saikhwa Ghat on the bank of the Lohit, trains did not run over that section of the line. Consequently I was fortunate, on arrival at Talap, to receive a telegram from Mr. Williamson of the Police, and Political Agent at Sadiya, informing me that he had made arrangements for my conveyance by trolley to the river bank.

Leaving such of my kit as could be dispensed with for a time in charge of the station-master at Talap, coolies ran me down on the trolley to Saikhwa Ghat, where I was met by one of Williamson's Police Inspectors, who reported a boat ready for me. Owing to the low state of the Lohit, however, my few belongings had to be carried a distance of 600 yards across the sands to the dug-out canoe awaiting me; and though the river

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was close on a mile in width, the main channel was only about 150 yards wide, and over by the right bank. Flowing down the broad bed elsewhere was a series of small channels and shallows; and for an hour and a half the three men of the Miri tribe in charge of the canoe poled and paddled their primitive craft against the current, before we eventually reached the main waterway and then darted across the intervening space of swift deep river to the right bank.

It was well-nigh dark by the time we landed on the far shore, and lowering clouds were threatening heavy rain at any moment; but Williamson had thoughtfully sent his pony and trap to meet me, and in it I drove for some 3 miles through the gathering gloom, along what seemed to be merely a village track, to his bungalow. There he welcomed me cordially beneath the bright lamp set up in its raised verandah, and right glad was I to reach my destination dry, for presently the clouds burst and it rained without cessation throughout the night.

My first impressions of Sadiya were thus the reverse of cheerful. The darkness, deepened by the great shadows from the trees lining the track by which I had driven, intensified the sombre aspect of this lonely outpost of Empire; but in Williamson I found a keen type of frontier official, and enthusiastic shikari, second to none I have met, so we talked far into the night. Our conversation embraced the situation created by Chinese penetration into the upper valley of the Lohit about Rima, and other matters concerning the Abors, Mishmis, and such neighbouring wild tribes whose haunts Williamson had visited; and now he was full of plans regarding further explorations that he hoped to be permitted to carry out in the near future. It was, indeed, a solitary life he led, for, apart from his own bungalow, there were only two others, in the nature of glorified

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huts, occupied at times by missionaries, whilst the small Circuit House but seldom accommodated visitors. Yet he seemed supremely happy in his isolation, with facilities for shikar, and the fascinations of the wild regions, and their uncouth inhabitants, existing almost at his door.

A dull, misty, showery day followed my arrival at Sadiya; but throughout the morning I derived much interest from seeing something of Williamson's strange visitors, Abors, Mishmis, Singphos, Ahoms and such-like. They had travelled from far afield, and now came to pay their respects to this splendid fair-haired specimen of a white man, whom they looked upon as their friend, and who towered above them as he greeted them. Wild mountain denizens were they, short of stature, and still at the bow and arrow stage, though *dahs* formed part of their equipment for combat at close quarters. In some ways I could almost imagine myself back among the savages of Central Africa, rather than hobnobbing with near neighbours of ours on the northern frontier of India, save that these natives did wear some cloth about their bodies. In form and feature they seemed not to differ greatly, though their cast of countenance was perhaps slightly more Mongolian than Bantu; but in other respects I doubt if they were of a higher order of civilization than my naked associates of earlier days in the Dark Continent.

Having obtained much information from Williamson regarding the country, Chinese activities, and so forth, I left for Dibrugarh next morning. It was still raining when we were roused at a very early hour, and my host drove me the 3 miles to the crossing of the Lohit opposite Saikhwa Ghat. With the current in our favour the boat transferred us to the other side in twenty minutes. Only a few miles below, the Dibang and Dihang issued from the great mountain barriers to the north, to com-

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bine with the Lohit and to flow onwards as the majestic Brahmaputra. At that time it had not been definitely established whether the Dihang was the Tsangpo of Tibet, or not; but Williamson seemed to have little doubt that they were one and the same. Not long before he had been a short distance up the river into Abor territory, and was bent on still further extending his explorations in that direction. But when we parted at Saikhwa Ghat, and he waved his farewell to me as my trolley set off for Talap station, little did I imagine that, soon after my return to Simla, the sad news of his treacherous murder by the Abors up the Dihang would be received.

At Talap I had to wait nearly two hours for the train to Dibrugarh; but during that time many Nagas passed the station on the way back to their homes, after clearing jungle with their *dahs* for conversion into tea-gardens. And the marked resemblance of these natives to the Wa-Teita and Wa-Kamba of British East Africa "on safari" struck me forcibly. My train eventually left at 9.30 a.m., retracing my course to Tinsukia and then bearing west through many tea-gardens. Dibrugarh was reached four hours later, and I was met at the station by Captain Sir George Dunbar of the Indian Army, a former Simla friend, and driven by him to his house, where I was the guest of Lady Dunbar and him during my stay. He was now in command of a battalion of Military Police, with its headquarters at Dibrugarh, and detachments spread along the frontier.

Some novelty was imparted to my visit by the fact that Lady Dunbar kept a tame tiger on the premises, and he strolled in and out of their drawing-room at will, and about the house generally, like a huge domesticated cat. Not being the same way of thinking as the late lamented Teddy Payne of Gaiety fame, however, I could not truthfully say that I liked tigers, when this

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beast, bigger than a bull-dog, suddenly entered the drawing-room, and sniffing a stranger stalked up to administer me a playful pat on the knee with his ponderous paw. The beggar hurt, but I hesitated to catch him a clip in return lest his ire should be raised, and he tempted, peradventure, to try and tear me limb from limb. Happily Lady Dunbar rose to the occasion, and the tiger took the cuff from her most meekly; after which he and I became on quite good speaking terms. For which relief I trust I was duly thankful to his fair mistress.

Dunbar was preparing a brochure on the Akahs, Daflas, Miris, Apa Tonangs, and other wild tribes inhabiting the hills to the north, bordering the Brahmaputra valley; and thus I was able to glean a good deal of information from him concerning the situation on the frontier hereabouts. Most of the above tribes apparently do not differ very materially from each other, save in the matter of language; and although no Chinese had as yet shown themselves in these regions, Tibetans were to be found in the hills to the north of Dibrugarh.

I had hoped to proceed from here by steamer down the Brahmaputra to Gauhatti, but the river was so exceptionally low, and navigation so difficult, steamers frequently running aground and remaining hard and fast thus for long periods, that I had reluctantly to abandon the idea, as the time at my disposal was nearing its end. Hence the 350 miles between the two places had to be traversed by rail, which necessitated a return along the Assam-Bengal Railway as far back as Lumding Junction, where the line to Gauhatti branched off. Lumding was reached at the unseasonable hour of 3.30 a.m., and a change there made into the Gauhatti train which left an hour later.

The country now entered was comparatively open plain, largely under rice cultivation, lying between the Mikri and Jaintia Hills. As we drew near to Gauhatti

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the latter were approached closely, and during the last 20 miles the track ran virtually through the foot-hills. Hamlets had been passed at frequent intervals, but the huts were of primitive construction, consisting for the most part of reed walls and thatched roofs, though the fertility of the district seemed assured by several rivers of some size flowing towards the Brahmaputra.

Gauhatti was reached at 1 p.m., and proved to be a pretty little station, very green and fresh looking, with neat well-kept bungalows on the bank of the Brahmaputra, the main channel of which must have been close on three-quarters of a mile wide. Later in the afternoon General Sir James Willcocks, commanding the Northern Army in India, arrived at the dâk bungalow with several members of his staff from an inspection of Shillong; and we all dined together that evening—a pleasant and entertaining one, since none of the party were strangers to each other, and amusing yarns were plentiful.

At Shillong I was the guest of General Bower, commanding the district, and previously a noted Tibetan explorer, whom I had heard lecture before the Royal Geographical Society eighteen years earlier, and met at Simla several times since. He took me for a delightful ride round the station and its environments after lunch; and Shillong struck me as the most home-like cantonment I had visited in India. The scenery was essentially English, and with its rolling grasslands, belts of pines, little lake, golf-links and race-course, reminded me somewhat of the surroundings of the Staff College at Camberley.

Early next morning again we set forth on another ride, to the Peak, a long grassy ridge to the south-east of the station, whence an extensive bird's-eye view of Shillong, and the rolling plateaux beyond, was obtained. Some 30 miles away to the south on these Khasi Hills lay Cherrapunji, notorious for its phenomenal rainfall.

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Speaking from memory, this amounts to something like an average of an inch and a half a day, or close on 500 inches in the year, with not infrequent downpours of more than 24 inches in the twenty-four hours. Happily, Shillong itself is spared these cascades, though not long before great damage had been caused in the station by a violent earthquake, which wrecked a number of bungalows and other buildings, besides destroying much of the bazaar.

This brief visit to Shillong gave me the desired opportunity for discussing many frontier intelligence matters with General Bower; and I returned to Gauhatti by special motor leaving at 10.30 a.m., reaching the bank of the Brahmaputra five hours later. Since travel by steamer was too precarious with the river in its present low state, I departed for Calcutta by train, with regret, that afternoon. We proceeded by rail some 6 miles down-stream to Pandu, where the river was only about half a mile wide, and there a ferry steamer conveyed us across to Amingaon on the right bank. The Calcutta train left soon after our arrival.

It was somewhat surprising to find snow still lying on the ground at Simla, although it was now the middle of March; but I had successfully eluded the worst of the winter months in this Himalayan retreat. I flattered myself, too, that during my two months' absence I had accumulated a good deal of information regarding a frontier of which I possessed no previous personal experience; and this, I hoped, might stand me in good stead in the event of an expedition being despatched to those regions to counter Chinese activities, and to establish British rights on a more secure footing than then existed.

Such an expedition soon became imperative, owing to the deplorable murder of Williamson and his party in Abor territory, to which reference has already been

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made. Throughout the early summer we were busy in Simla preparing Military Reports and maps for the force detailed, under the command of General Bower, to punish this truculent tribe, and to open out theirs and the Mishmi country, in the autumn. The General was good enough to apply for my services as his Intelligence Officer when the expedition set forth on its mission; but the Powers-that-were in Simla, alas! did not see their way to granting me permission to accompany him. Thus I felt somewhat robbed of the fruit of my labours in the field and office.

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CHAPTER XXII

MARRIAGE, AND PEEP AT KASHMIR

I was joined at Simla in April, 1911, by my sister, who had previously spent eighteen months with me at Agra and Ranikhet in 1905–7; and we set up house again in a small furnished bungalow, Forest Lodge, which I rented from Major and Mrs. Hugh Champain when they proceeded home on leave that spring. Together we entered thoroughly into the life of the ensuing Simla season; and as my sister was both witty and cheery she made a host of new friends, and greatly enjoyed the Black Heart "revels" and the many other dances, dinners, tennis and theatres which came our way, this being her first experience of Simla.

It was destined to be my last summer there, for my period of employ on the Staff at A.H.Q. was drawing to a close; and in November I was transferred to the Military Works at Bombay for a brief spell prior to proceeding home to join a Senior Officers' Refreshing course at Chatham for R.E. officers serving in India. Meanwhile, as the great Delhi Durbar was to be held in December, and attended by King George and Queen Mary, a large number of additional British and Indian troops were moved into camps at Bombay from neighbouring cantonments, in order to do honour to their Majesties when landing on Indian soil, and to line the streets during their long drive through the city. Besides being employed in laying out the necessary camps, providing their water supply, and other requirements for

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the troops, my services were enlisted by the G.O.C. Bombay as an extra A.Q.M.G. And on his staff, just ahead of the royal carriage, I took part in the sweltering trot of 7 or 8 miles in a Turkish bath temperature through the crowded streets of the city, which were packed with dense multitudes of natives.

There was some anxiety felt by the Indian C.I.D. as to the nature of the reception their Majesties would meet with during their passage through the city; and great precautions had been taken to prevent any possible outrage in the way of bomb-throwing from some of the lofty houses bordering the route. The head of the C.I.D. was an old Simla friend; and I observed him near the Apollo Bundar landing-stage shortly before their Majesties arrived ashore in their launch. His usually cheery, smiling countenance wore something of a worried look, so I took the opportunity of having a few words with him. Apparently most of the men of known bad character in Bombay had been safely put away for the time being, and he hoped that if everything went off satisfactorily here, the rest of India would take its cue from Bombay, and little trouble be experienced elsewhere during the Royal visit. In order to be on the safe side, however, it was decided that the Royal carriage and its escort should proceed at a trot from the time the cavalcade left the Apollo Bundar until its return there.

As matters turned out, there was no attempt to disturb the harmony of this, the first, visit of a King Emperor and his Consort to their great Indian Dependency. Their Majesties were everywhere greeted with spontaneous acclamations by the crowds lining their drive through the city; as they were also at the Military Tournament and other functions attended by them during their stay in Bombay. Nevertheless, we who rode in that bright cavalcade were unfeignedly glad to reach

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the sea-front again; for the still, steamy heat within the city streets had tried man and horse much during that 8-mile trot. Indeed, when we pulled up again at the Apollo Bundar, our horses were so lathered with foam and dripping wet, while we ourselves were so soaked with perspiration, that we could hardly have been more moist had we swum a stream in full uniform and top boots.

My sister and I sailed for England in the P. & O. *Maloja* at the close of the year, she having the good fortune to be present at the Delhi Durbar with friends, in the Bengal Sappers and Miners' camp, and joining me at Bombay after. The voyage proved a cheery one, and we got plenty of cricket on board, as the First Class, under the captaincy of Lord Harris, challenged the Second Class soon after we left, and I was chosen to captain the latter. Return matches were played at intervals, and on arrival at Port Said a combined team of First and Second Class challenged the local team. We were beaten by a few runs, however, after Lord Harris and I had bowled unchanged to get Port Said out for about 120 runs. It was a sad home-coming for my sister and me, though, as on landing we learned that my youngest surviving brother was seriously ill in a Nursing Home at Bournemouth; and he died little more than a month later, at the early age of 38.

The ensuing spring and summer were spent by me at the S.M.E., Chatham, with about a dozen other R.E.'s from India, Colonel J. E. Capper, an old friend of Zhob days, then being the Commandant; and a very jolly time we had on the refresher course, with plenty of cricket and tennis thrown in, as well as tours to different parts of England. I also did some salmon and sea-trout fishing; the former in Wales with my old chief Macdonald, and the latter at Newburgh on the Ythan, some 15 miles north of Aberdeen.

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Then, in the autumn, when the Chatham course concluded, I embarked on my greatest adventure—Matrimony. The young lady who was to make me so happy was no new acquaintance; for I had known her since she was a little child, our first introduction dating back to some twenty years before, when a tiny brown-eyed tot had bashfully invited me to join in play with her doll's house. I had then but lately returned to England from my first African Expedition; and subsequently saw something of the little lass every time I came home on leave from abroad. Thus I had watched her grow into an attractive girl, and then into a charming, unselfish woman; so when I spent a week at her home in Bournemouth, as the guest of her parents, Colonel and Mrs. McCausland, I felt that here was the one woman who could, if she but would, make me a very lucky man.

But I was due to return to India within the next three weeks, so time was short. Thus an unexpected proposal on the Meyrick Park Golf-links took the object of my affection completely by surprise, particularly as I was leaving for London a few hours later. I had to rest content, therefore, with a non-committal reply pending further grave consideration of the weighty matter; and it was not until several leaden days had passed that all suspense was removed by a letter which made me the happiest man in England.

Thereupon I arranged to visit Bournemouth again a few days later; but shortly before my intended departure from London I received a rather enigmatic telegram from my fiancée's mother, asking me to defer my visit for a while, and that she was writing to explain. Disturbed in mind, I returned to my home in Clifton instead; and there next day a letter arrived to say that my fiancée had suddenly fallen a victim to an acute attack of appendicitis, necessitating an immediate opera-

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tion in her own home at four hours' notice. Though progressing favourably, the doctors considered I ought not to see her for ten days at least; and that a wedding would be out of the question for certainly a month.

That was a disconcerting bolt from the blue as, under existing arrangements, I should be half-way to India by then; and I wished to take my bride with me if it could possibly be managed. There was only one thing to be done; and I owe a debt of gratitude to the India Office for providing my wife and myself with passages in a troop-ship sailing three weeks later than the original date on which I had been ordered to embark.

Three days before it left we were married very quietly at Bournemouth, as she had only lately risen from her sick-bed; so none but our respective parents and sisters were present, save my old friend Major Pringle, who acted as my best man. After the ceremony we proceeded straight to Southampton. Fortunately, I was O.C. Troops for most of the voyage, and thus my wife and I had the best cabin accommodation on board; while it was so bracing in the Bay of Biscay and Mediterranean that, by the time the Red Sea was reached, the invalid had practically thrown off the debilitating effects of her recent severe operation.

On arrival at Bombay I found myself posted to the Military Works at Rawalpindi; but after a few months I was transferred to the staff of Major-General Sir Gerald Kitson, commanding the Rawalpindi Division, as one of his G.S.O.'s 2. In Staff Rides, Inter-Brigade Manœuvres, and other military exercises, the winter and spring months passed very pleasantly; and on the approach of the hot weather Divisional Headquarters moved up to Murree, where my wife and I occupied the bungalow I knew so well, twenty-four summers earlier, as the residence of Captain and Mrs. Finnis.

As at most hill-stations, the summer at Murree is

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cheery, dances, tennis, theatricals, and other amusements keeping things going; while I often accompanied the General on tours of inspection of the troops, distributed in the *galis* around, besides attending the Senior Officers' musketry course at Changla Gali. At this time also I was offered, and accepted with all humility, the appointment of G.S.O. 1, at the Quetta Staff College, which was to fall vacant at the beginning of 1914. The Commandant, Brig.-General (now General Sir) Walter Braithwaite, who greatly distinguished himself in the European War, first as Sir Ian Hamilton's chief staff officer at Gallipoli, and later as a Corps Commander in France, invited me to Quetta to give a lecture to the students. The journey at the height of the hot weather was no joy ride; but this was more than compensated for by the kindly hospitality of General and Mrs. Braithwaite during the few days spent with them, and the friendly welcome of the other members of the directing staff (several of whom were old pals of mine), as well as that of the students themselves.

Whilst the Divisional offices were moving down to Rawalpindi for the cold weather in October, General Kitson granted me ten days' leave, which my wife and I decided to utilize in a hurried trip to Kashmir; for it seemed doubtful if we should ever have so good an opportunity of visiting that country, now that the next four years appeared likely to claim our presence at Quetta. We therefore chartered a roomy motor and native chauffeur from one of the firms at Pindi, and were picked up with our belongings at Murree. Thus we sped to Srinagar in a manner that would have made old hands, bound for the Happy Valley twenty-four years earlier, green with envy. Brother-officers at Peshawur in 1889, who were fortunate enough to obtain three months' leave to Kashmir, spent a considerable portion of their time in marching the 200 miles from

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Pindi to Srinagar, and onwards, carrying their tents and kit in ekkas, or on ponies, and pitching camps at various stages en route. Few facilities then existed for more rapid means of reaching their destinations; whereas the roads were now sufficiently improved to make travel by motors a simple and expeditious business.

Srinagar, distant about 160 miles from Murree, was to be our *pied à terre* during the few days we could spend in Kashmir; and as Lieut.-Colonel A. Joly de Lotbinière, R.E., the Chief Engineer of the Kashmir State, and his wife, were very kindly putting us up in their charming house, they were our immediate objective.

Despite a rather late start from Murree, we successfully traversed about 50 miles through the mountains during the first day, and passed the night at the Domel dâk bungalow, where we were some 5,000 feet lower than Murree. Off again early next morning, we still pursued our way by a winding track through the hills, amid entrancing scenery and glorious autumnal tints, before emerging on to the open plain-like Kashmir Valley at Baramula. Here we spent the night in the picturesquely situated dâk bungalow on the bank of the Jhelum, now placidly flowing over meadows in marked contrast to its boisterous torrents crossed, and followed, during the earlier stages of the journey.

The 34-mile run into Srinagar beside the river was practically along a flat plain more than 5,000 feet above sea level, the straight stretches of road passing between lofty poplars whose leaves had assumed rich, ripe-corn hues, which gleamed in the morning sunshine as mile after mile was reeled off down this vista of golden trees lining the track. But to the north and south the broad open valley was bounded by magnificent mountains, many peaks and ridges to the north being already capped with autumnal snows, though Nanga Perbat, and other monarchs of the Himalayas, were hidden for a time by

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the lower ranges intervening between the valley and their more distant summits.

On reaching the Lotbinière's house in Srinagar, our kind hosts did everything possible to make our short visit a thoroughly enjoyable one. The Maharajah's Palace, the British Residency garden, the conspicuous Takht-i-Sulaiman hill, rising 1,000 feet out of the valley, the beautiful Dal Lake, and the captivating old Mogul gardens, the Nishat Bagh, and the Shalimar Bagh—famous in song—were, of course, all visited, and duly admired, by us; whilst one of the few days at our disposal was devoted to a run out in the motor to Gulmarg, that paradise for hundreds of Europeans spending the summer in Kashmir.

Being now the late autumn, however, these birds had all flown; so when we reached the base of the northern slopes of the Pir Panjal after our 26-mile drive from Srinagar, a pony awaited me and a *dandy* my wife, by previous arrangement, to convey us to the "Meadow of Flowers," perched some 3,500 feet above the plain, and approached by a long winding track through beautifully wooded hill-sides. The Residency, hotel, Club, and the numerous huts built and owned by Europeans, were all deserted; whilst the grassy golf-links, cricket and polo grounds, and tennis courts stood silent and forsaken.

Indeed, we were the sole white folk in occupation of this attractive resort; but having brought our lunch and tea, with access to the Lotbinière's hut wherein to have our meals, we spent the livelong day wandering about the level roads that run around this wonderful bowl in the mountains, drinking in the beauties about us. The air was crisp, and invigorating as champagne at this altitude of 8,500 feet; while the autumnal shades of the foliage were lovely, and the views from each fresh coign of vantage in the clear atmosphere of this

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season, superb. Thus we were able to feast our eyes upon the majestic peak of Nanga Perbat, whose snow-white summit, more than 26,000 feet above the sea, and only some 80 miles distant, seemed to float in the pale blue vault of the heavens in regal detachment from its neighbours of lesser degree.

The return journey from Srinagar to Rawalpindi was accomplished in two stages of about 100 miles each; and during the next few months much of my time was spent in the ordinary routine of Staff work in the Divisional office. I snatched such opportunities as I could, however, for reading up, refreshing, and preparing myself for the task which lay before me as an instructor at Quetta. Eventually, early in January, 1914, my wife and I set forth for the bleak uplands of Baluchistan, and wintry indeed was the aspect when we commenced to settle into our new home within the Staff College area, for it stands nearly 6,000 feet above the sea and is exposed to bitter east winds. Twelve to fifteen degrees of frost at night greeted our advent, whilst a thin mantle of snow lay upon the ground, and covered more thickly the hill-tops around.

Most of the unmarried students who had done a year at the College were absent on their Christmas vacation; but fortunately several of the married staff and students were still in residence. And from them and their wives we received ungrudging help in getting ship-shape before the bulk of the second year's men returned, and the new batch arrived to be initiated into the many-sided activities required of them ere they could blossom forth into full-blown Staff officers.

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CHAPTER XXIII

QUETTA, AND CLOSING DAYS IN INDIA

Although the environments of the Staff College at Quetta form a striking contrast to those at Camberley, owing to the usually bleak, barren and stony nature of this Baluchistan plateau, the curriculum of work approximated closely to the course of study at the Home College, making due allowance for the different conditions obtaining at the two places. General Braithwaite, our Commandant, was frequently interchanging ideas with the Camberley Commandant; whilst the country round was sufficiently well adapted for a large variety of tactical, strategical and administrative exercises. Moreover, the ports of Karachi and Bombay were not too remote to be visited in connection with military problems concerning transportations by sea, dis-embarkations, amphibious operations, coast defences, and the like. Thus the students at Quetta received a comprehensive insight into the divers duties that might fall to their lot as future Staff officers, at the close of their two years' strenuous course.

At this time some twenty-five students were admitted annually, and the instruction of these fifty officers was carried out by a staff of eight more senior ones who had previously graduated as P.S.C.'s either at Camberley, or more recently still at Quetta. As I was then the next senior to General Braithwaite, he made me chiefly responsible for the instruction of the newly arrived batch, with the assistance of several old friends of the Directing Staff. Thus we formed a happy party at once when I entered

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upon my new duties; and by the time winter frosts, sleet and snow had given place to the genial sunshine and warmth of spring I had grown accustomed to my fresh rôle as "teacher"—thanks to the cheerful help of my colleagues, Lieut.-Colonels Skeen, Sheppard, De Pree, Isaac, Taylor and Shuttleworth; while the close attention and co-operation of those under instruction further smoothed my path.

The spring in Quetta is but of brief duration, for barely does the winter season pass away than summer is ushered in with cloudless skies and a dearth of rain, often for six months at a stretch. Much of one's work then was of an outdoor nature, and we would sometimes be absent from the College for several days at a time, engaged in Staff Rides and such exercises at Pishin, Nushki, and other places in the country around. Owing to the extreme dryness of the atmosphere, the power of the sun, and the glare from roads and rocks, these outings generally played havoc with the faces and hands of those possessing fair and tender skins. Despite huge solah topis, and tying handkerchiefs across their faces to protect their noses, cheeks and chins, these unfortunates blistered and skinned to such a painful extent that they only obtained relief from their sufferings on reaching the shelter of the Staff College again. Happily my thick hide proved impervious to the onsets of the fierce sun, so I was usually sorry when these interesting and instructive trips came to a close.

The gardens in which our bungalows stood were among the chief attractions of the College precincts; and much friendly rivalry existed between their owners, who vied in eclipsing their neighbours in some particular branch of horticulture. At first glance a new-comer might imagine that such unpromising soil as surrounded our special *enclave* was incapable of producing anything but rich crops of stone; for the ground in the vicinity seemed little else than a sterile expanse of grey grit and pebbles, in

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which camel-thorn alone appeared to thrive. Nevertheless, by digging deep into the apparently hopeless stuff, carefully screening the out-take, and casting aside the three-parts pebble, the residue formed a wondrous fertile volcanic species of loam, in beds of which nearly every kind of English fruit, flower and vegetable flourished exceedingly.

We were fortunate in this respect, for the quarters assigned to me were next in importance to those of the Commandant; and within our commodious compound fruit trees and vines were now at their best bearing age, the College having been opened only some seven years previously. When in blossom during the spring these presented a truly beautiful sight; whilst throughout several of the summer months we almost suffered from a plethora of fruit, consisting chiefly of thousands of peaches from our numerous trees. Their branches were so overburdened with these much appreciated delicacies that they had to be propped up with stout poles, to prevent them snapping asunder under their weight. The pathway to our stables, too, was lined on both sides with nectarine trees, from which we derived an abundance of luscious refreshment in the hot weather. From other parts of the garden we obtained quantities of apricots, cherries, grapes, figs, plums, apples, walnuts, almonds, strawberries, raspberries, and many varieties of vegetables.

Nor were the flower-beds less productive of pleasure, for roses thrived, and many annuals, including magnificent sweet-peas, kept the garden gay, and furnished welcome decorations for our rooms. But all this wealth of fruit had some slight drawbacks during the summer season, since it attracted immense numbers of hornets which swarmed about the garden, taking heavy and wasteful toll of peaches and other succulent morsels; whilst the ubiquitous jackal was only prevented from devouring the grapes within jump-reach from the ground, by enclosing each separate bunch in a stout wire-framed muslin bag.

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It may appear surprising that this profusion of fruit, flowers and vegetables should be possible, seeing that little or no rain fell during the summer months, when most required and when the country round was dried-up and drab. Our immunity from a similar state of things was solely due to a powerful stream flowing swiftly from the Hanna Valley, alongside the main road leading past the College, and down into the cantonment of Quetta proper, some 3 miles distant and 300 feet lower than us. This *karez* was almost daily tapped en route to irrigate our gardens, in accordance with a carefully arranged time-table. Every bungalow was able, thereby, to obtain a supply of water for an hour or two about twice a week, our *malis* opening, at their appointed times, primitive sluices leading from the main stream to feed a perfect labyrinth of lesser channels, constructed by them to carry water to any required beds in the garden.

It is perhaps needless to say that it was not all work and no play at Quetta; for though the facilities for games within the College precincts were limited to squash racquets and tennis courts, the Quetta Club provided other means of recreation in the shape of a race-course, polo, cricket and hockey grounds, golf-links, a racquet court and numerous tennis ones, as at most large Indian stations. There was thus no lack of variety in the way of pastimes; while the Staff College polo teams usually occupied prominent positions in tournaments open to the whole station, and its cricket and other teams held their own against all comers. Good shooting, too, was obtainable at certain seasons of the year, the hills and valleys around teeming with chikor, and other game birds; whilst duck, snipe and teal frequented the jheels and miniature lakes in the neighbourhood, and big game roamed the craggy heights somewhat farther afield.

But the even tenor of our way was soon to be rudely interrupted by the outbreak of the Great War. When in

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August we learned that Britain had definitely decided to throw in her weight on the side of France, Belgium and Russia, our relief was great and excitement began to rise, gradually reaching fever heat as guarded news of the retreat from Mons and other stirring events commenced to trickle through to our remoteness from the scenes of strife. A spirit of unrest could scarcely be concealed, since it was shared by both students and staff. And when the tide of war seemed to turn at the Marne in the early days of September, some impatient fiery souls pictured the European conflagration, for which they had been, and still were, preparing themselves, as likely to result in the speedy collapse of the Germans, and triumphal entry of the Allies into Berlin before Christmas! For them to be denied all participation in these great battles, and the final victory, was too painful a prospect to contemplate.

It soon became apparent, though, that affairs at the front were not proceeding on quite such simple lines. India was called upon to furnish a Corps of two Divisions for France at once; while other formations were subsequently equipped for service in Egypt, East Africa and Mesopotamia. Thus almost daily students began to be recalled to their units, destined for service overseas; and our Commandant himself was hastily summoned by cable to England, leaving me in temporary charge of the College.

For another three weeks our rapidly dwindling numbers contrived to keep the work at Quetta going under extraordinarily disturbing conditions; and then at last I received orders from Army Headquarters at Simla to close the College down. The remaining students were to return to their units, whilst all the Directing Staff, save Skeen and myself, were appointed to the staff of various formations being assembled to sail shortly for divers theatres of war. We two were instructed to proceed to Simla forthwith, and there assume the duties vacated by

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two other senior officers bound for France. This was not what we had been led to believe would be the rôle of any of the Directing Staff at Quetta; for in the event of war on a large scale necessitating the closing of the College, it had always been understood that we were all ear-marked for Staff appointments in the Expeditionary Force.

Some weeks after our arrival at Simla, my companion in sorrow was appointed, however, to the staff of the Australian Corps, about to assemble in Egypt, under the command of General Birdwood; and by his great ability he has since risen to the proud position of Chief of the General Staff in India. I was destined to remain more than another year in India, though that year proved far from colourless. A healthful winter was spent by my wife, me and our small son at a comfortable hotel in Simla, among many friends; and apart from my office work much of my time was occupied in preparing a series of lectures on the war. These were given once a fortnight, bringing events in the various theatres up to date, so far as possible with the scanty information available, and illustrating my observations with large maps, tables, and so forth.

Such lectures proved popular and, indeed, developed into one of the social functions of the winter season at Simla, being usually attended by two or three hundred European residents of the place. They were given in the large dining-room of the Cecil Hotel in the afternoon, and preceded by tea-parties made up by officers and their wives in the adjoining rooms and verandahs; from whence all were ruthlessly summoned by loud clang of bell when the lecturer was ready, and took his stand at his rostrum!

The terrible losses in British officers in France soon made it manifest that Sandhurst could not cope with the demand to fill the ever-widening gaps, and to furnish its quota of officers for the Indian Army at the same time. Early in 1915, therefore, it was decided that India must itself undertake the training of Public School boys, and

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other suitable youths, as officers for the Indian Army; and so it came about that a Cadet College was brought into being at Quetta, within the precincts of the now deserted Staff College.

One hundred young gentlemen of English parentage, and between the ages of 17 and 23, were to come out from England, as a start, and to receive six months' intensive grounding in the rudiments of the military profession, and also practical instruction in Urdu, the *lingua franca* of Indian troops. At the end of their six months' course, such cadets as made good use of their opportunities were to be gazetted as second-lieutenants to cavalry and infantry units in the Indian Army, direct from the College.

Owing probably to my knowledge of the local conditions, and the possibilities of the Staff College buildings for conversion into their new sphere of activity, it fell upon me to be appointed, unsought, to the post of first Commandant of the Cadet College, Quetta, with the rank of Brigadier-General. I was summoned from Simla to Delhi to interview the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Beauchamp Duff, and then to work out details for starting this Sandhurst in India, so to speak. It was an interesting experience although I had to jerk my mind back across some thirty years, in order to recall my supreme ignorance of military subjects when I joined as a cadet at Woolwich in 1885; and to visualize the thorny track along which I had been led, during two years, to acquire a smattering of my profession there. But now the requisite knowledge had to be imparted in six months at Quetta.

Fortunately, my wife had packed up all our furniture and other belongings, and carefully stored them in the bungalow, until we knew definitely what was to become of me, before following me to Simla in October. Hence it was an easy thing now to start life afresh in our old home, for which we left Delhi in March, as I wished to be on the spot at least a month before the cadets arrived

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from England. Much yet remained to be done in personally supervising all the necessary alterations and additions about the College precincts, in furnishing the quarters, enrolling servants for the cadets, obtaining horses from the cavalry regiment for their use, providing arms and equipment for them, and a host of things besides. And gradually during this busy period, the staff detailed to assist me in our novel undertaking gathered from different parts of India, their work allotted to them by me, and programmes drawn up and approved by Army Headquarters.

Since we were denied, at least for the time being, an active share in operations overseas, we felt that we were doing the next best thing by helping to train youths of England to play their part presently as officers in the devastating World War. And so, despite their disappointments, the zeal of my colleagues assured the success of the College from its commencement; and I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to Lieut.-Colonels Stockley and Waterfield, Majors Blore, Grant, Peart, Marjoribanks, Nangle and Naylor, and Captains Wilson, Stone, MacPherson and Daniell.

So successful did the College prove that, four months after it opened, the authorities decided to start another similar institution at Wellington, in Southern India; and to ensure it being run on identical lines, my Assistant Commandant, and old friend, Lieut.-Colonel H. R. Stockley, R.E., was taken from me to organize and launch the new venture, as its first Commandant, his place with me being filled by Colonel Waterfield. Thus Quetta and Wellington turned out annually between them some 400 British officers for the Indian Army during the remainder of the war; whilst the staffs at both Colleges were changed from time to time, and those relieved given appointments with various British forces operating overseas.

Our experiences at the Cadet College were full of

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interest. My wife and I tried to get to know each boy individually by having small parties of them frequently to our house for tea, tennis and badminton; and when sitting out they were free to regale themselves on peaches and other fruits, which they plucked from our trees and devoured with gusto. To-day, one of my wife's most treasured mementoes of that period is a table-cloth, round the borders of which she has worked in blue silk the signatures of every member of my staff and all the cadets, obtained from them for that purpose.

Thus I flattered myself that I knew each lad personally; and that they, for their part, saw so much of their Commandant in lecture rooms, out with them on their work, in their games, and in his own house, that his face and form were familiar to all. Yet rather a droll experience befell me later in Mesopotamia, where many of these cadets subsequently joined units of the Indian Army. I, too, was transferred there after seeing the first batch through Quetta, and few of my "boys" in "Mespot" failed to look me up when at, or passing through, my headquarters on the Tigris.

One day, however, I was inspecting a post established at Ezra's Tomb; and the Section Commander, a colonel, accompanying me, told me there was a particularly smart youngster here who had graduated at Quetta recently. On the boy being introduced to me, I saw he was not one of my former cadets, so imagined he was one of the second batch, who had shortly before come out from the College.

At the close of my inspection I entered into conversation with the young subaltern, and remarked that I suppose he had lately left Quetta with the second batch of cadets; but was not a little taken back by his reply, "Oh, no, sir. I joined the College when it first opened; but as I was rather more advanced than the rest I got my commission at the end of four months, instead of having to do the whole six months there."

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That was certainly surprising; for every cadet under me and, so far as I knew, at Wellington also, had to put in a full six months' course before considered fit for a commission. Thinking the boy might have momentarily confounded Wellington with Quetta, I suggested as much, only to be met with an injured repudiation of the idea. This naturally drew from me the observation, "Well, my dear boy, I happened to be the Commandant at Quetta who put the first batch of cadets through the College; and, frankly, I don't remember you as one of them."

One might suppose that the young officer would be somewhat abashed by his General catching him out in weaving a senseless romance; but, as I had been told, the boy was smart, and replied without a moment's hesitation, "Were you, sir? I don't remember you, either!"

The lad had evidently joined the Indian Army Reserve of Officers when war broke out, like many other patriotic youths in India; but for some reason, intelligible to those in the know, thought it might sound more *haut ton* to claim having graduated for his commission at Quetta. The betting was certainly some thousands to one against the late Commandant of that College being thus encountered at so desolate and remote a spot as Ezra's Tomb.

Though tempted to linger on Cadet College days, I must hurry on to say that the six months' course came to its close in the middle of November; and our final function was the Inspection, and presentation of prizes and commissions to the cadets by General Sir Malcolm Grover, commanding the Quetta Division. He had always taken the greatest interest in the College and the boys, and spoke in eulogistic terms of all he saw of their turn-out and accomplishments on Prize Day. Only three of the original hundred cadets failed to get commissions. Of these one poor lad was drowned; while

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the other two had missed so much work owing to sickness that I recommended they should be transferred to Wellington, and complete the course in progress there, in the hope that they, too, might qualify for commissions at the end of it.

And so these now second-lieutenants departed to their new regiments, while several of the staff went off for a brief holiday pending the arrival of another batch from England. But early in December I received orders to proceed to Mesopotamia at once, to take up an appointment there as Brig.-General on the General Staff. I accordingly handed over charge of the College to Lieut.-Colonel Waterfield, my Assistant Commandant and now successor.

As usual, it fell to my wife's lot to remain behind and sell off such of our furniture, etc., as was now no longer required, and to store those things likely to be needed hereafter at Karachi, on her way home. Passages to England were shortly to be provided for her, our son and the Scots nurse; so, fortified with this thought, I departed with a light heart for Karachi, to embark for Basrah. It was not until some weeks later that I learned the *Persia* had been torpedoed in the Mediterranean, just before my wife and family steamed out from Port Said for Marseilles. The Germans had commenced their ruthless sinking of peaceful liners.

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CHAPTER XXIV

MESOPOTAMIA, THE LAST LAP

On arrival at Karachi, I was delighted to find that one of my fellow-travellers in the mail steamer to Basrah was an old Camberley Staff College friend, General Arthur Money, who had been appointed Chief of the General Staff to General Sir John Nixon, Commanding in Mesopotamia. Events on the Tigris had recently taken an unfavourable turn; for after his defeat at Ctesiphon, Townshend had to fall back on Kut, and his force was now besieged there by the Turks. To General Aylmer, V.C., was entrusted the task of relieving him.

My first introduction to Mesopotamia was not of an exhilarating nature. After dining with Sir John Nixon at Basrah, on the evening of our arrival there, I left to join General Aylmer at Amarah in a launch kindly placed at my disposal by Sir Percy Cox, the Chief Political Officer to the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. Steaming slowly against the current throughout the night, we reached Qurnah—the reputed site of the Garden of Eden, but now in a sad state of disrepair—at the old junction of the Euphrates with the Tigris, at daylight. We were still little more than 40 miles from Basrah, but the Arab crew now lightheartedly informed me they were unable to proceed any farther, as the boilers showed signs of weakness, and they feared a break-down. This was a cheerful piece of intelligence, since I was 90 miles distant yet from my destination.

The S.S.O. at Qurnah eventually managed to adjust

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matters, however, and we pushed our tedious way onwards through a desolate region of vast marshes extending from the Tigris to the Euphrates in one direction, and to near the Persian frontier in the other. The livelong day the launch laboured up the depressing stream; but towards nightfall one of the boilers did give out. There was nothing for it but to tie up to the bank of the dreary waste, and carry out such repairs as were possible before attempting another start.

Luckily we came to grief close beside the wreck of the Turkish gunboat *Marmaris*, which had been sunk by British shells during the advance on Amarah from Qurnah; and she was in process of being blown up piecemeal by Lieutenant Sclater, R.E., who resided in his demolition steamer near by. It was getting dark when I proceeded along the bank to his ship, and made known our dilemma to him; whereupon he sent a few of his sepoys to mount guard over the launch during the night—the Marsh Arabs around being notorious thieves —and invited me to dine with him. It was Christmas Day, and I gratefully accepted, to be regaled on a repast with which my modest provisions on board the launch could not have hoped to vie.

All efforts to make further headway against the current in our crippled condition, next morning, proved futile; and ultimately I was forced to hail the *Shirin*, a tug proceeding slowly up-stream, with a heavily laden barge attached to each side of her, to take me on board. The Arab skipper courteously handed over the use of his small and not too clean cabin to me, and I was glad of this accommodation during the thirty hours spent in his ship before we reached Amarah. The launch turned down-stream for Basrah as soon as my servant and I had transferred our belongings to the *Shirin*, and was quickly out of sight.

On arrival at Amarah I found that Major "Bob"

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Cassels and Captain Wilson-Johnston were to be my G.S. colleagues on General Aylmer's staff. Both were able, hard-working officers; and during the later stages of the campaign in Mesopotamia the former gained great distinction as a dashing cavalry leader, who was largely instrumental in effecting the surrender of big bodies of Turkish troops on several occasions, and rapidly reached the rank of Major-General in recognition of his daring expliots.

General Aylmer left Amarah on the last day of December in the steamer *Mejidieh* for Ali Gharbi, some 80 miles up-stream, where the Kut Relief Force was assembling; and thence the Corps advanced by land towards Kut along both banks of the river, a few days later. On the engagements that ensued at Shaikh Sa'ad, Wadi and Hannah, and the added miseries of gales, floods, rain and mud that hindered operations during those three weeks, it is not my purpose to dwell. These are matters of history, but all took heavy toll of the Relief Force, whose casualties exceeded 9,000 killed and wounded when it was brought to a standstill before the carefully prepared Turkish lines at Hannah on January 21st. The two splendid Indian divisions from France had, in fact, been reduced to little more than skeletons by their heavy losses.

Yet, here I should remark, in justice to General Aylmer, that it is doubtful if the great Napoleon himself (to whose exploits Townshend was so fond of alluding in his expansive wireless communiquês to Aylmer from Kut) could have vanquished the Turks at this stage, had he been so ill-supplied with munitions of war, and other essential requirements of an army in the field, as was Aylmer.

A week later I was transferred to the newly created post of G.O.C. Tigris Defences, with my headquarters at Amarah. The immediate task assigned to me by

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Sir Percy Lake, who had succeeded Sir John Nixon in Chief Command in Mesopotamia, was to select various defensive positions in rear, and prepare plans for occupying them, in the event of a retirement before Kut being forced upon us.

I accordingly left Corps Headquarters at Wadi with Major (now Major-General) Herdon, my staff officer, and Major H. H. Turner, R.E., as survey officer, for Shaikh Sa'ad, to select a defensive position to cover that village, in which a large number of sick and wounded had been left. During our second night there, the steamer on which we were living was heavily sniped by Arabs, and Herdon was grievously wounded whilst sleeping alongside me on deck, and one of the sepoy guard killed a few feet from us by the fusillade directed against the ship from out of the darkness.

Ten days later I was joined at Ali Gharbi by my new staff officer, Captain Ogle, who was a first-year student at Quetta when the war broke out, and who remained with me now for nearly two and a half years. In the course of the next seven weeks we examined much country on both banks of the Tigris, and selected a series of defensive positions as far down the river as Amarah. Early in April, however, I was ordered up to Shaikh Sa'ad to take command of the three battalions, squadron and battery holding that important place on the L. of C., which was exposed to lively Turkish cavalry raids from behind their main position.

The 13th British Division under General Maude had recently arrived from Gallipoli, with my old friend O'Dowda, of the Rawalpindi staff, in command of one of his brigades; and together with the now reconstructed 3rd and 7th Indian Divisions a final effort was to be made by General Gorringe, who had succeeded Aylmer, to carry theTurkish lines covering Kut. And so for the

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next three weeks, we who were but a dozen miles distant from the main scene of conflict, as the crow flies, could hear the din of battle, the booming of the guns, and the rat-a-tat of machine-guns, during the desperate series of struggles to succour the hard-pressed garrison of Kut. But the stars in their courses seemed to conspire against the British; for the Tigris came down in heavy flood, carrying away pontoon bridges, and bursting its banks, thus inundating great areas across which the attackers had to flounder under heavy and well-directed fire. Vain were their attempts, therefore, to dislodge the obstinate foe from his formidable succession of trenches and positions that barred the way to their coveted goal, so near at hand.

We at Shaikh Sa'ad also had our spells of excitement, many minor alarums and excursions being created, chiefly by enemy cavalry and Arab marauders at night; while reports were received at intervals from Corps Headquarters that strong bodies of troops were seen marching in our direction, as though to cut the river communication in our rear. The river, too, burst its bank in several places a few miles up-stream of our main position, and the covering line of redoubts we had constructed out in the open plain; and these inundations caused the troops much labour to repair the wide breaches, and restore land communication between Shaikh Sa'ad and the front.

We had thus plenty to keep us on the *qui vive*, when I was summoned to Corps Headquarters by General Gorringe on April 28th, and spent the night in his camp. Certain matters concerning my command, the river breaches, and a proposed railway reconnaissance from Shaikh Sa'ad along the right bank, were among the subjects discussed; and I then learned that Townshend, unable to hold out any longer, was negotiating with the Turks for the surrender of Kut. This tragic blow

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to British prestige in the East was carried out by him the following afternoon.

With the surrender of Kut active operations for the time being gradually died down; and arrangements were made for the re-distribution of the troops against the approaching hot weather season. After establishing a mobile column of all arms at Mudelil, about half-way between Ali Gharbi and Amarah, I took up my head-quarters again at the latter town. My command was later extended down-stream to Qurnah, and thence some 50 miles up the branch of the Euphrates to the Hammar Lake; so much of the succeeding months was spent in travelling up and down the Tigris between Qurnah and Shaikh Sa'ad, inspecting and improving existing posts, and creating new ones; whilst mobile columns of all arms were located at Ali Gharbi, Mudelil and Amarah for the protection of those 200 miles of Tigris water-way.

The hot weather of 1916 developed into a very sickly one, for cholera, dysentery, enteric and scurvy not only took heavy toll of the men but caused much invaliding to India. Colonel McMullen, my section commander in the Amarah area, died there of enteric after nearly a month spent in hospital; while young Prunty, my orderly officer, was removed to hospital with cholera one afternoon and died the next day. I saw a good deal of Sir Victor Horsley, the eminent physician, at this time, for together we selected sites for infectious disease camps, convalescent depots, and so on, as Amarah was rapidly becoming a great hospital centre, and was soon able to accommodate 6,000 sick and wounded under canvas, and in huts.

On the strength of being an ardent teetotaller, Sir Victor was, I fear, rather disposed to treat the Mesopotamian sun in July with scant respect; and several times I upbraided him for wearing what I deemed insufficient

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head and spine protection at that fierce time of the year. When leaving the Rawalpindi Hospital one evening, after visiting a number of sick and wounded officers, I was surprised, nevertheless, to meet Sir Victor at the entrance, being carried in on an invalid chair.

"Hullo, Sir Victor, what's the meaning of this? Nothing serious, I hope," I anxiously inquired; but he brushed my concern aside with a smiling "Oh, it's nothing, General; just a slight touch of the sun, I think."

His temperature, then already high, rapidly rose, however, to an alarming extent; and when I went round to see him next day the doctors refused me permission to enter his ward, owing to the grave condition of their noted patient. Nothing tried would bring his consuming temperature down, and he passed away shortly before 9 p.m. that night, July 16th, after little more than twenty-four hours in hospital. He was buried in the Amarah cemetery the following evening, his funeral being attended by a large number of officers and Nursing Sisters, including my staff and myself.

The ever-changing character of the East provided no exception in Mesopotamia. Within the course of nine months, no less than three Army Commanders controlled the operations being undertaken simultaneously on the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun river fronts. Sir John Nixon had given place to Sir Percy Lake in January; and in September the latter was relieved by Sir Stanley Maude, who, six months before, had landed in the country in command of the 13th Division. In India also, Sir Beauchamp Duff had been replaced by Sir Charles Munro; and the new Commander-in-Chief in India paid a visit to Mesopotamia in October, being accompanied by General Maude during his tour, which reached Amarah on the 17th. Besides an interview with Sir Charles Munro, I had the pleasure also of meeting my

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old friends "Tommy" Scott and Andrew Skeen, then on the staff of H.E. from India.

The new Army Commander quickly acquired a masterly grasp of the complicated situation, and details of his widely distributed forces; and there was probably little throughout his command with which he was not personally familiar, when he launched his well-prepared attack against the Turks occupying Kut in the middle of December. Under his direction the position in Mesopotamia underwent a complete change; for a few months later not only had the Turks been driven from their series of strong trenches about Kut, which they had held for more than a year, but Baghdad itself, 220 miles farther up the Tigris, was captured by the British on March 11th, 1917.

And here I digress for a moment to say that, shortly after General Maude commenced his assaults on the Turkish lines around Kut, I first made the acquaintance of Miss Gertrude Bell. Although she came to Mesopotamia in March, 1916, this highly gifted and intrepid lady was quartered in Basrah for nearly a year; and it was not until January, 1917, that she paid a brief visit to Amarah, in company with Mr. Philby of the Political Department. I then had the pleasure of meeting her at tea, and she lunched with me at my headquarters on January 5th. It was difficult to associate this charming lady of slight, almost frail, physique, with the exacting and daring feats of Alpine climbing, and hazardous explorations in the thirsty Arabian deserts, that had made her so famous of women. Certainly her self-less conversation would not have led one to suspect her of notable achievements in the past, for the future of the Arabs, and Mesopotamia in particular, absorbed much of her thoughts and utterance, at the present.

When General Maude's victorious army began to roll onwards from Kut, my part was to follow closely

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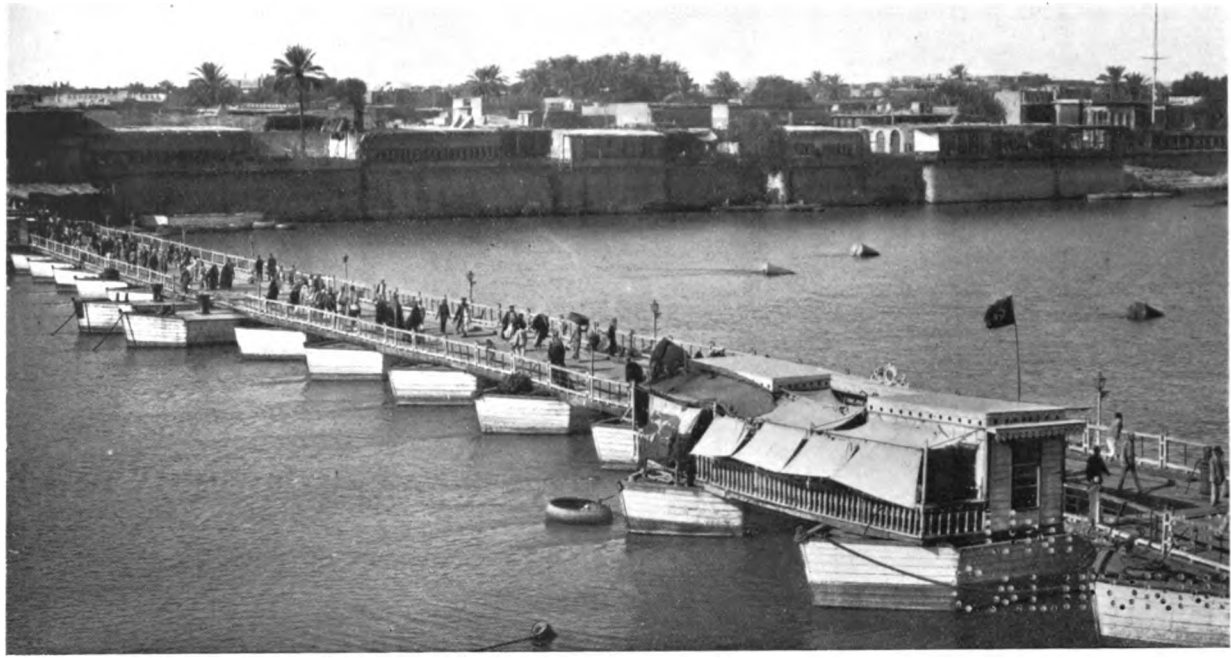

Old Baghdad Bridge of Boats across Tigris.

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in its wake, garrisoning important strategic points along the Tigris with additional troops handed over to me for the purpose. Thus, on the occupation of Baghdad, my command embraced the whole of the Tigris from Basrah to Baghdad, both exclusive, with a portion of the Diala river, and the stretch of the Euphrates from Qurnah to the Hammar Lake—aggregating more than 500 miles of river defences. The troops under my orders numbered more than 20,000 for a time, including cavalry, infantry and guns; while mobile columns of all arms were now located at Amarah, Shaikh Sa'ad, Bghaileh and Azizieh, besides marching-posts and railway-station defences, gradually established every 12 miles or so between Basrah and Baghdad. Consequently, still more of my time during the next eighteen months was spent in touring up and down the Tigris from my headquarters at Amarah, inspecting the defences and garrisons in this long stretch of river line; and perfecting arrangements to foil the daring activities of Arab rifle thieves, who proved a perfect pest along the L. of C. But concerning them I have written elsewhere.[1]

This period was broken, however, by a spell of leave to England in the hot weather of 1917, when operations in the field came to a close for a time. My father had died in Clifton early in the previous December; and my mother only outlived him three months, passing away on March 12th, the day after the capture of Baghdad. In these circumstances, General Maude granted me twenty-eight days' leave in England, so long as I made my own arrangements to get there from India, and was back in Mesopotamia before the middle of September.

Sailing in the trooper *Ekma* from Basrah on June 7th, we reached Bombay on the 13th, to find that the English mail I hoped to catch had left the previous day. The

[1] "Rifle Thieves of Iraq" (*Blackwood's Magazine*, Oct., 1921).

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Germans, just then, were apparently sowing mines about Bombay, Colombo and Aden, with the aid of neutral ships; for the *City of Exeter*, which had sailed from Bombay the day before, struck a mine some 30 miles out, and got back to port with difficulty. For the next nine days I was kept hanging about in Bombay, waiting for an opportunity to obtain a passage to England; and my patience would have been sorely tried but for the kind hospitality of my old friend Colonel N. Kirby, R.E., and his wife, who put me up throughout my stay in Bombay. At length, the P. & O. *Khiva* arrived in harbour from Australia, en route to England, and I easily procured a berth in her, as there were some sixty or seventy passengers only aboard.

Enemy aeroplanes had dropped bombs on Port Said a few days before we reached that port, on July 6th; and the steamer *Caledonia* was torpedoed by a submarine some 20 miles out. As it was reported that a number of these pests were hanging about the Mediterranean entrance to the Suez Canal, all portholes on the *Khiva* were closed, and darkened, so that no lights might be shown at night. Moreover, a 4·7-inch gun was taken aboard and mounted aft, with its crew lodged alongside; while the captain asked me to mobilize all men among the first and second class passengers, as additional submarine watches by day. Thus, for the voyage across the Mediterranean I arranged for two-hour watches, for six passengers at a time, between the hours of 4 a.m. and 8 p.m. These gentlemen were posted in six prominent positions, selected by the captain whence they could command a wide view of the sea, and be at the same time visible to the ship's officer on duty on the bridge. Armed with field-glasses and whistles, the watchers announced anything suspicious seen on the surface by a shrill pipe on the whistle, and a hand extended in the direction of the object observed.

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We steamed out of Port Said at 6 p.m. on the 7th, and at once commenced to zigzag along our course, passing before dark the wrecks of several recently torpedoed ships, whose masts alone showed above the surface. We rarely saw a ship during the next few days, and though the sea was calm, and a keen lookout kept by our volunteers, no periscope of submarine was sighted, and little beyond drift-wood signalled at intervals by the piping of whistles. We reached, and entered, a sheltered bay on the south side of Malta on the evening of July 11th. It was a part of the island none of us passengers had previously visited; and small fast motor launches were dashing about at all hours. Hither and thither they scurried, and then disappeared out to sea, seeking to locate enemy submarines. We were ensconced, in fact, in a lately established "funk-hole"; and here we were stuck for three and a half days, being denied permission to proceed, owing to the prevalence of submarines in the vicinity; while visions of my rapidly diminishing leave tried my patience much, for during these days more and more ships congregated, until we numbered more than a dozen in the bay.

Then at dawn on the 15th the *Khiva* at last slipped out, accompanied by a Holt Line steamer, and both escorted by a naval sloop; but towards nightfall the day after, we narrowly missed a torpedo fired at us by some unseen submarine in the descending darkness, when off the south of Sardinia. It was after dinner; our day watches had been taken off for the night, and a group of us were leaning over the rails, gazing into the gathering gloom to the east, and talking to the Chief Officer who had momentarily come down from the bridge. The ship was presumably silhouetted, however, against the last remnants of day to the west; for one of our number suddenly called our attention to what he described as a strange fish. The ugly-looking object was tearing

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through the water with a wake of foam, and appeared certain to take us amidships, as it seemed only 300 or 400 yards distant when spotted. In two bounds the Chief Officer gained the bridge, sounded the alarm siren, and put the helm hard aport; whilst all aboard hurriedly ranged themselves on deck alongside the boats told off to them, scrambled into their life-belts, and calmly awaited the crash, which seemed inevitable.

I was watching the torpedo most of the time, and judged it could not but hit the after-part of the ship, in spite of the rapid change in our course. And as we thus stood beside our boats during those tense seconds, I remember saying to myself, "D——n! I won't get the samovar home to Win, after all," my mind reverting to a particularly handsome one, a mixture of copper and brass, which I had bought for my wife in the Baghdad bazaar soon after our occupation of that famous city. Yet, to our relief, the missile missed its mark, though only by a hair's-breadth, so to speak; for the vile purveyor of destruction dashed beneath the ship's counter, on which the 4·7-inch gun was mounted, and so close to the screws that their furious churnings flung the evil thing out of the water, to plunge nose first below the surface again and disappear for ever.

It was a near thing; and we all breathed the more freely when the moment of anticipated explosion passed without mishap, and the sloop sped away into the darkness in vain pursuit of our invisible assailant. We were little less pleased when we entered the shelter of Marseilles harbour at 9 p.m. the night after, and our voyage across the hazardous Mediterranean was over for the time being.

We were not allowed to disembark until next day, many formalities having to be gone through with regard to passports, etc.; so it was past midday before the P. & O. express left for Boulogne, where we arrived twenty-

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four hours later. Here we transferred to a Channel boat, crowded with troops proceeding home on leave from the Somme front, in command of whom I was temporarily placed before we steamed across to Folkestone, escorted by five destroyers. But it was so late by the time we reached Victoria Station that I was unable to continue my journey to Bournemouth that evening, so had my belongings conveyed by a sturdy porter lass to the Grosvenor Hotel, where I spent the night.

It had not been my experience before to have my traps carried at a station by a cheery young woman, neatly attired in a blue and white uniform; so I rather jibbed at the idea, and suggested carting the things myself, if she would let me wheel the truck along. But she smilingly assured me that it was quite the order of the day now, so we set off together through the streets to the hotel entrance.

Thanks to a good start from London next morning, I reached the new home my wife had made for us at Bournemouth in time for lunch; and was then introduced to my second son, born six months after my wife reached England from Quetta, and now nearly a year old. The joy of reunion with my small family was marred within a few hours, however, by the receipt of a letter from the War Office, the selfsame afternoon, ordering me to return to Mesopotamia by a trooper sailing on July 26th. It was already the 20th; so I telegraphed, pointing out that this would give me less than a week at home, after an absence of nearly five years in the East. But not until the evening of the 24th did I receive a wire from the W.O. cancelling the original order; and meanwhile, of course, I had to remain prepared to sail on the date assigned.

Eventually I was directed to embark at Folkestone in a leave boat crossing to Boulogne on the afternoon of August 17th, in order to catch a trooper sailing from

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Taranto, near the heel of Italy, on the 21st. My mind being thus placed at ease again, my family and I were able to snatch a few weeks' enjoyment together, before my wife and I went up to London to spend the last week of my leave in a round of theatres, and so on.

Needless to say, the day of departure arrived all too quickly; but I met several old friends returning to the French fronts in the crowded Channel boat and was thus able to glean some information regarding the sanguinary Vimy battles, then in progress, before we parted at Boulogne. Leaving that port in the small hours of the morning, the few officers in the train bound for Taranto reached Paris next morning; and here we had nearly twelve hours at our disposal before continuing the journey to Rome, where we arrived some forty hours later. Here again we were detained for close on twelve hours, so spent the interval, as at Paris, in sightseeing, visiting St. Peter's and other places of note during the hours of daylight. The remainder of the journey to Taranto was performed chiefly at night, as we reached our destination soon after breakfast next morning, and embarked that afternoon on the huge Union Castle liner *Saxon*. She lay out in the magnificent land-locked, though spacious, harbour—reported capable of comfortably holding all the fleets of the Allies at once—which is separated from the open sea by a deep canal-like cut passing through the centre of the town.

The *Saxon* had been scheduled to sail that evening; but we were detained another forty-eight hours, awaiting the arrival of additional officers and troops. At length, packed with troops, she issued forth on the evening of the 23rd, and cautiously steamed through the long narrow cut, which seemed to leave little spare space between its high precipitous sides for our passage. Once out in the open, we were joined by two Japanese destroyers that were to escort us to Port Said.

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Shortly after midnight, however, we were aroused from our slumbers by the blasts of the siren, and all aboard fell in hastily on their posts equipped with life-belts. As no severe shock had been felt by most, the cause of the alarm signal was not very apparent at first; but it later transpired that in the darkness—no lights being carried, of course—one of the destroyers had come into collision with us. She lost one of her masts in so doing, and was sufficiently damaged otherwise to necessitate her return to Taranto; whilst the *Saxon* was fortunate enough to get off with a hole in her bow, 8 or 9 feet above water level. S.O.S. calls brought up other destroyers to the spot, but after a couple of hours' delay we pushed on again, and entered Plataria Bay on the Albanian coast off Corfu, about 8 a.m. next morning.

To reach our anchorage we were piloted through the winding passage in a carefully wired screen, designed to prevent the entry of enemy submarines into this beautiful secluded "funk-hole." A series of such had been established along the coast route to Egypt and Salonika, on the principle that, by day, when ships were most vulnerable to submarine attacks, they should lie within the protection of these harbours of refuge; and steam largely in the hours of darkness from one point to another. Our departure from Plataria Bay was delayed, however, by orders of the French Admiral in control until the evening of the following day; the enforced halt being taken advantage of by men and officers bathing off the ship's side, and from shore, visited in boats by many.

Our next "funk-hole" was Navarino Bay, which we entered in the early morning of the 26th. The daytime only was spent in this picturesque land-locked harbour, rendered famous as the scene of the destruction of the Turkish fleet by the French, British and Russians in 1827; for, getting under way again that evening, we

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made straight for Port Said, where we arrived without incident shortly before 10 p.m. on the 28th, and steamed serenely into harbour under a bright moonlight.

The remainder of the voyage to the head of the Persian Gulf was along well-known routes, so needs little mention, save to say the heat in the Gulf was great; and that all troops had to transfer from the *Saxon* to three lesser steamers during the night of the 10th–11th September, outside the bar at the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab. Her deep draught precluded the *Saxon* attempting to cross it, and she now proceeded to Bombay. My own river steamer, the S. 30, was awaiting my advent at Basrah; and in her I resumed my inspections of the Tigris Defences as I steamed up the familiar reaches of the river to my headquarters at Amarah, where I arrived on September 16th, after an absence of fifteen weeks.

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CHAPTER XXV

NEARING THE END

On my return to Iraq, I learned with some satisfaction that a brevet-colonelcy had been conferred on me in the recent Honours List for my work in the country. This was the third brevet rank awarded me during my service: but the last proved of the least benefit to me. I had received a brevet lieut.-colonelcy six and a half years before, and for the past two and a half years had held the position of a brigadier-general; whilst, soon after the end of the war, I was gazetted a substantive colonel as from January 18th, 1915, in the usual course. Consequently I had, in effect, already been a substantive colonel for nearly two and a half years, when I was awarded the brevet of colonel as from June 3rd, 1917. It was unfortunate for me, therefore, that this intended honour was an entirely barren one.

Were I to recount the varied activities that fell to my lot during the next twenty-one months spent in Mesopotamia, the story would be a long one. Briefly, however, much of the following year was passed in my steamer S. 30 (i.e. Stern-wheeler No. 30), disrespectfully termed "The Puffing Billy" by others, chiefly because her smoke stack was right for'ard. Nevertheless, she was a comfortable, speedy and handy craft, furnished with electric light and fans in her cosy little cabins, that enabled even the hottest days of the hot weather to be borne with some semblance of equanimity on board. She seemed to me and my staff the lap of luxury, as

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compared with the strange vessels placed, earlier in the campaign, at my disposal for my voyages up and down the Tigris. My first conveyance, for example, was a *gyassah*, a local Arab sailing boat some 25 feet in length, provided with a palm-leaf mat roof over her well, where we toiled, fed and slept, whilst fastened alongside P.10 (Paddle-wheel No. 10), a diminutive steamer that laboriously towed us about the Tigris, and the swampy reaches of the Euphrates about Qurnah, a prey to the persecutions of flies by day, and mosquitoes and other evil insects at night.

Active operations against the Turks were resumed in the autumn, to drive their forces still farther afield from such portions of Iraq as they occupied. On the Tigris above Baghdad, to the north, along the deserts of the Euphrates, to the west, and up the Diala towards the Persian frontier hills and Kirkuk, to the north-east, British troops were set in motion to expel the enemy from the land he had so grievously misgoverned, and ruined, during the past four centuries.

Barely had these fresh operations been in progress a month, however, when the startling news was received that General Maude had been taken seriously ill at Baghdad on the night of November 16th. A telegram reached me at Amarah during dinner on the 18th, reporting his condition as grave; and after I had retired to bed a further telegram was brought to me announcing his death at 6 p.m. that evening. The cause of death was later attributed to cholera. Thus passed away, at the height of his fame, a much-lamented brilliant soldier, whose energy, foresight and great military ability had changed the aspect of war in Mesopotamia from one of discouragement, at the fall of Kut, to one of cheery optimism on the capture of Baghdad.

With the Turks thus gradually driven farther afield, fresh Line of Communication problems arose, and addi-

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tional appointments had be to created. Two of my most capable section commanders, Colonels Lock and Boome, were placed in defence command of the newly opened railway running from Basrah to Nasiriyah, and Advanced Tigris Defences from Baghdad onwards, respectively, with the rank of Brigadier-Generals. Colonel Boome had worked long and loyally under me, and had acted for me during my absence on leave to England; so, sorry as I was to be deprived of his valuable assistance, I rejoiced at the promotion that had now come his way.

The steady opening out of the country under the impetus of British energy, and the introduction of prosperity and progress after centuries of neglect and decay under the Turkish régime, were noteworthy features of the change in Iraq at this period. Railways, for the first time in the history of this ancient, though impoverished, land, were being pushed forward in various directions. That from Basrah to Nasiriyah has already been mentioned; but prior to that a line had been built beside, and through, the marshes between Basrah and Amarah; whilst Baghdad was being gradually linked by rail with Kut, along the left bank of the Tigris. And before I left the country in June, 1919, another line ran from Baghdad, along the right bank of the Tigris, for more than 100 miles north, towards Mosul; and likewise one from Baghdad to the Persian frontier about Khanikin.

The number of light-draught steamers on the Tigris, too, had been multiplied beyond conception since the closing days of 1915; and not a few of the former palatial Irrawaddy liners were now serving the State on the less picturesque rivers of Mesopotamia. Even Thames tugs and "penny steamers" had travelled East to lend a hand, and were to be seen cheerily churning the waters of the Tigris, as if all in the day's work. Fleets of

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Ford cars also, steered by drivers of nearly every nationality in the Empire, scoured the plains behind the forces engaged in active operations against the Turks, carrying supplies from great depots on the river to the troops; and returning with freights of sick and wounded from near the fighting line.

All these things must surely have struck the dwellers in Mesopotamia with wonderment, when they looked back and contrasted the present bustle and activity with the recent slothful, effete and corrupt days of Turkish rule in the land.

During the weary months of heavy fighting around Kut, the truculent Arabs of Hai town had always been a menace and thorn in the flesh to our troops. This place is about 35 miles down the Shatt-al-Hai, which flows out of the Tigris opposite Kut; and the stream was at one time the ancient course of the Tigris, when that river joined the Euphrates to the south, near Nasiriyah. But the Hai to-day is only navigable by steamers when the Tigris is fairly full. As a detachment of Gurkhas from Kut, under my command, was holding the town in May, 1918, I visited the place of ill-repute in S. 30; and found, to my surprise, a charmingly wooded settlement, abounding with fruit gardens enclosed between high mud walls. In one such a number of local magnates were introduced to me at tea one broiling afternoon by Captain Kirke, the resident Political Officer; and judging by their present demeanour, one would have imagined that these erstwhile hostile marauders welcomed the advent of the British as their very good friends, and had always regarded their coreligionists, the Turks, with loathing since the land had fallen under their baneful sway.

Further south again, from Basrah, I took several trips off my beat, visiting Zubair and the battle-field of Shaiba, where our troops won a hard-fought victory

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under Gorringe, during the early stages of the campaign in Mesopotamia. Shaikh Ibrahim of Zubair entertained our party to a most lavish meal at 10.30 a.m., although we had breakfasted before leaving Basrah in motors a couple of hours earlier. The long table, at which we Europeans and Arabs sat down together, groaned beneath the weight of joints, pillaus and other country dishes; and to these we were ceaselessly urged to help ourselves—with our fingers, since no knives or forks were provided at the feast. After feeling gorged to distraction, from a sense of politeness, our digestive organs were granted some chance of recovery from the gargantuan meal, while we watched weird and furious dances by the armed retainers of the shaikh in the open courtyard of his residence. We finally tore ourselves away from this energetic display to speed across the desert to Shaiba, and thence back to Basrah as the shadows lengthened.

After seeing the wonders of Babylon, Ur of the Chaldees was the place I next most wished to visit in Mesopotamia; and the railway from Basrah to Nasiriyah made it easy to reach, particularly as General Tidswell, commanding the troops at the latter station, kindly offered to put me and one of my staff officers up. Leaving Makina railway station after an early dinner, the greater part of the journey of 140 miles was performed during the hours of darkness, as Nasiriyah was gained shortly before 8 a.m. Some 12 miles back we had passed Tal al Lahm, its prominent mound, once a Ziggurat, denoting the site of Ur; and after breakfast at his house, General Tidswell drove us out to the spot again in his motor, and personally conducted us over the ruins of the old city. Since no excavations were in progress, nor had been carried out for many years, there was little on the surface to suggest the archaeological importance of this site; for it consisted chiefly of a wide area of a

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blackish-looking sand, broken by undulations and hummocks, and all littered with small sea-shells. Everything was dwarfed, however, by the one conspicuous, tower-shaped mound, the excavations in which during the past few years continue to reveal much regarding the history of these regions before the days of Abraham.

In the afternoon General Tidswell conveyed us in his launch along the Euphrates to the scene of the semi-aquatic battle of Nasiriyah. This, too, had been won by Gorringe in the early part of the campaign, and placed that important town, with the Euphrates down to Basrah, in British possession. Nevertheless, sporadic and fanatical outbreaks by the Muntafiks, the largest and most powerful tribe in Mesopotamia, had to be carefully guarded against; so a strong force of British troops still occupied a well-entrenched position on the outskirts of Nasiriyah.

Although I had now seen considerable stretches of the two most noted rivers in Mesopotamia and certain portions of the Diala and Hai, it was not until the spring of 1918 that I was able to pay a visit to Ahwaz. This Persian town of some 3,000 inhabitants is situated about 120 miles up the Karun River from Mohammerah, and is distant perhaps 70 miles from the famous Anglo-Persian oil-fields around Maidan-i-Naftun, to the north-east. Steaming down the Shatt-al-Arab in S. 30, the 20 odd miles to Mohammerah were traversed in under three hours; and we spent the remainder of the day at this flourishing town in Persian territory, where a Persian force was defeated by British troops from India, under General Outram, in March, 1857, and where now a considerable staff of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company were located.

The Karun at this season was nearly bank full, with an average width of 400 yards; but the force of the current was strong and the course of the river tortuous,

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so we only made 65 or 70 miles during our first day up it, and tied up for the night alongside the village of Qajarieh. Thence onwards much cultivation existed on both banks, and villages became far more numerous as we approached Ahwaz. There we moored S. 30 to the right bank, within the perimeter of the Field Force camp (then under the command of Colonel Watson, one of my former section commanders on the Tigris), and facing Nasiri and Ahwaz on the opposite shore.

During the afternoon we crossed the 500 yards of river in a bitumen-covered canoe, the *bellum* of Mesopotamia, and had a look round the two towns. Between them flow 1½ miles of rapids, which commence just below Ahwaz; so in this stretch transportation of cargo by land is necessary, to make use of the navigable part of the Karun above Ahwaz. Barely had we got back to S. 30 when a violent thunderstorm broke over us; and it was still drizzling next morning as we started off in Watson's motor for Shush, the ancient Susa, situated on the Kharkhek River, 80 miles to the north of Ahwaz. The going was not too bad, however, for the first 22 miles, when we struck the Kharkheh; but a little later the rain began to come down in real earnest, and the outlook grew very black on ahead, while the ground became boggier and boggier every moment, so that we feared we might get marooned in the desert. With much reluctance, therefore, we turned about and struggled with some difficulty back to camp, and the shelter of S. 30. Further heavy storms during the night banished all hope of reaching Shush in the short time at my disposal; so we sped homeward with the flood next morning, and arrived at Mohammerah in the early afternoon.

At the end of August I was greatly cheered by the receipt of a telegram from the Army Commander, congratulating me on being awarded the C.B. in the Honours

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Gazette, lately published in England. This kindly thought on the part of Sir William Marshall was my first intimation of the good news; though later in the day other telegrams flowed in from my old friends Generals Fraser and Leslie, both of whom were soon to be promoted to Divisional Commanders in Mesopotamia, and General O'Dowda, besides many others in the country. General Gorringe, likewise, wrote at this time to congratulate me from France; and his optimistic letter, received some weeks later in the Baqubah Refugee Camp, confidently predicted that the tide of war had at last turned in our favour, that the Germans had about reached the end of their powers of resistance, and that the final victory of the Allies was in sight.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE FINISH AT BAQUBAH

My long association with Tigris Defences was now rapidly drawing to a close; for less than a month later I received a telegram from G.H.Q. informing me that I had been selected to take command of a Jelu Refugee Camp, in process of being created at Baqubah. The Tigris Defences were to be gradually denuded of regular troops, owing to the seemingly settled state of the country along the river; and such defensive measures as appeared necessary were to be undertaken by the able and energetic Inspector-General of Communications, Major-General Sir George MacMunn. Some thirty-five different battalions of British and Indian infantry, various batteries, and several Indian cavalry regiments had come under my command at one time or another, during the two and three-quarter years I had been G.O.C. Tigris Defences; so I had made many new friends, and was sorry to sever thus my connection with the Tigris.

Never having previously heard of the Jelus, or why a huge refugee camp should be erected for them at Baqubah—on the Diala, about 33 miles to the north-north-east of Baghdad—I set forth from Amarah, still puzzled, in S. 30 on the last day of September. I was accompanied by one of my section commanders, Lieut.-Colonel Becher, who was to be my chief staff officer in the fresh undertaking before us; but even when we reached G.H.Q. at Baghdad we could gain little information, beyond the fact that thousands of refugees of

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weird and wonderful appearance were pouring into Baqubah from Persia, and that all had to be provided with shelter, food and clothing. A number of medical and other officers, as well as British and Indian soldiers, were already assembled at Baqubah, engaged in this task; and I was to assume command, create, and administer a camp capable of accommodating probably 50,000 helpless, sick and starving souls.

With the meagre information obtained, we bade a last farewell to S. 30, had our belongings dumped ashore at Hinaidi railway station, and placed on an open truck to follow us by train later; while Becher and I mounted a motor trolly, in which we sped over the arid sun-bitten plains for our new destination and novel venture.

An hour and a half later we caught glimpses of white tents on ahead, and presently crossed a narrow canal of flowing water, along both banks of which men, women and children were busily engaged washing themselves and their clothes. Fair for Orientals, many of the young women and children were decidedly pretty, and the men fine specimens of humanity; while the scene unfolded was unexpectedly picturesque, due to the diversity and kaleidoscopic effect of the bright garments and headgears displayed in this wilderness.

The motor trolly now plunged down the incline towards the Diala; down the centre of what a few weeks later was destined to be a huge tented city of close on 50,000 souls. A goodly array of palm-leaf mat shelters had even now sprung up on both sides of the line, as some 20,000 refugees were already congregated at Baqubah; and so, during our descent to the primitive station in the middle of the camp, we were carried through as strange a menagerie of humanity as I had ever gazed upon—the so-called "Jelus."

And here I would remark that the term "Jelu" applied to the coterie of small nations we ultimately

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sheltered was a misnomer; for of all that host there were not more than 600 or 700 Jelus proper, and they were but a minor clan of Assyrian Mountaineers. Of the 50,000 homeless people we housed, fed, clothed and provided medical treatment for, one-third were Armenians, whose former homes were chiefly in the vicinity of Lake Van, in Turkish territory. Another third consisted of Assyrians of the mountains of Kurdistan, in Hakkiari, likewise in Turkish territory; while the third group comprised Assyrians and Armenians of the Urumieh and Salmas uplands in Persia, where they had been settled as Persian subjects for some generations. Strangely enough, the proportion of men, women, and children under 14 years of age, in each of the above groups was almost identical, viz., about one-third of each.

Two-thirds of the refugees were, in fact, a most interesting residue of the once mighty Assyrian nation, and claim to be of the same race as Sennacherib; for their forefathers lived in the mountains, chiefly as shepherds and quarrymen, and thus escaped extermination at the sack of Nineveh more than 2,500 years ago. To-day, the remnants of the race are all Christians, their conversion dating back, by tradition, to the time of the Apostles, when the new faith was carried into the provinces of the old Assyrian Empire, and was once well established in the lands between the Tigris and Euphrates.

Space permits but a brief survey of the terrible tragedy that befell these peoples during the Great War, at the hands of Moslems by whom they were largely outnumbered, and fenced in on all sides. The Assyrian Mountaineers of Hakkiari early espoused the cause of the Allies, being persuaded by the Russians to combine with them in operations against the Turks in Kurdistan. Having thus committed themselves, they were almost at once abandoned to their fate by the Russians, who

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retired northwards to Lake Van. Thus these hardy, but ill-armed, mountaineers were left to fight single-handed against Turks and Kurds for the protection of their homes. Yet for six long weary months they kept their revengeful foes at bay amid the mountains; but were then compelled to seek safety by breaking through their assailants with their women, children and flocks, in order to join their brethren living in the plains of Persia. An amazing feat, seeing that they were encompassed by grim mountain ranges and gorges, as difficult to traverse as any habitable region on earth, and already capped with snow.

This was in the autumn of 1915; and Russian troops shortly afterwards reached Urumieh from the north. Despite their previous desertion, and loss of their homes, the Assyrians again agreed to help the Russians; and three battalions of Mountaineers were raised, and commanded by Russian officers as an integral part of their army. These battalions were employed by the Russians in fighting against the Turks and Kurds, until the dissolution of the Russian army was brought about by their far-reaching revolution; and quite a number of the Assyrians were wearing at Baqubah the Russian Cross of St. George, gained by them for gallantry in the field.

Unhappily, early in December, 1917, Russia decided to withdraw all its forces from north-west Persia, again leaving the Assyrians and Armenians to look after themselves in their precarious position. The Persians now joined the Turks and Kurds against the isolated Christians; and by an act of treachery the Patriarch of the Assyrians, the spiritual and temporal head of the nation, was foully murdered. Between March and July, 1918, the stout-hearted Christians nevertheless defeated their encircling enemies in no less than fourteen distinct engagements. Alone they routed Turkish regular divi-

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sions on two different occasions, capturing several guns and some hundreds of prisoners from their hereditary foe.

But, surrounded by overwhelming numbers, and their stock of ammunition running dangerously low, the Christians were at length forced to abandon their asylum in the Urumieh plains. Then commenced a terrible southerly retreat through hostile country to seek safety with the British, now in occupation of the main line of road communication through Persia, from Baghdad to the Caspian Sea, a length of over 600 miles.

Attempts had been made to get into touch with the hard-pressed Christians around Urumieh, which was more than 300 miles distant from Hamadan, the nearest Persian town in our shadowy possession. A British aeroplane had reached Urumieh after a perilous journey, early in July; and it was then arranged that a small force would be sent to meet the fugitives in the vicinity of Sain Kaleh—about midway between Hamadan and Urumieh.

Hardly had the Christian throng begun to evacuate Urumieh when the Persian population commenced to kill women and children, old men and sick, in the streets of the town. Following the fugitives, they cut the throats of stragglers, without respect to age or sex. Some 10,000 Christians were intercepted, and never able to join the exodus, their fate being uncertain, though it is conjectured that most were massacred.

This barbaric slaughter continued during much of the long trek of 320 miles to Hamadan. The horrors of the journey were somewhat mitigated, however, after Sain Kaleh was reached, thanks to the gallant efforts of a mere handful of British mounted troops—a squadron of the 14th Hussars, and a section of machine-gunners —who strove day after day to keep the pursuing Moslems at bay, in order to cover the retirement of the refugee hordes. Thousands of the latter died by the

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way-side from hunger, disease, and utter exhaustion; while the remnants, some 55,000 in number, ultimately staggered into Hamadan, in mid-August, in a most pitiable condition.

The maintenance of the British forces in Persia, spread out to the Caspian, was already a problem of great difficulty, for famine raged throughout the land. It is obvious, therefore, that the advent of tens of thousands of destitute men, women and children seriously aggravated the question of supplies. Hence it was decided to enrol several thousands of the more robust males as an Irregular Force for service in Persia, under British officers and N.C.O.'S; and to draft the remainder down the road in batches, during the next few months, to some Concentration Camp readily accessible from supply centres in Mesopotamia.

Thus it came about that a great loop of the Diala River, near the small town of Baqubah, on the direct caravan route to Persia and distant about 250 miles from Hamadan, was selected for the purpose. The railway line, then in course of construction from Baghdad to the Persian frontier, traversed the centre of the river loop, so supplies and other requisites could be easily drawn by rail from Baghdad. Hence, by degrees, here arose a huge tented city of forlorn humanity; a task in which I was assisted, before demobilization greatly reduced my staff, by some 3,000 officers and men, British and Indian, as well as a band of devoted Nursing Sisters. The work performed by all, particularly in the three General Hospitals established in the camp, was beyond praise, more especially at the time when sickness among the poor homeless wanderers was a very distressing circumstance in our novel environment. It is a source of satisfaction to me, therefore, that a number of my staff were rewarded in the Honours List of June, 1919, on my recommendation.

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At first the hospitals, each of 750 beds, were filled to overflowing, and for some months the deaths unfortunately averaged fifty to sixty daily, chiefly due to dysentery brought in by new-comers; though small-pox, pneumonia and ailments of the young also took their toll. But shelter, rest, good food and efficient sanitary methods gradually worked wonders; and when I severed my connection with this great canvas city, in June, 1919, I had the gratification of seeing myself surrounded by as healthy a population of 45,000 inhabitants as one could wish. The deaths then did not exceed twenty to twenty-five weekly.

Our camp at Baqubah soon began to be regarded as one of the "Raree-shows" in Mesopotamia, and many were the officers who came, week after week, and from far afield, to be conducted round, in order to see for themselves the strange medley and picturesque garbs of our menagerie, the fame of which had quickly spread abroad. Even General "Jack" Cowans and Sir John Hewett, both out from England on other important duties, found time to visit the camp on several occasions, and were much intrigued by all they saw. But I must refer those who wish to learn more about these homeless derelicts to "The Baqubah Refugee Camp," a booklet of mine published by the Faith Press in 1920.

I lost no time in making the acquaintance of the leading personalities among the Refugees as they arrived; and thus commenced my friendship with the Patriarchal House of the Nestorians. The murdered Mar Benjamin Shimun had been succeeded by his younger brother Mar Polos Shimun; and with him and his highly gifted sister, Surma Khanum, I spent many a pleasant hour during the eight months I commanded the camp. The Lady Surma visited England soon after my return to that country, to plead the cause of her people at the Peace Conference at Versailles, and stayed a week with

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my wife and myself at Bournemouth. Towards the close of 1925, also, she flew from Baghdad to Cairo and then travelled once more to England, in order to urge the repatriation of her race to their former homes in Hakkiari, when the new frontier between Iraq and Turkey was under discussion. Then, too, we had the pleasure of entertaining her for a week.

Mar Polos Shimun, unhappily, died of consumption less than a year after I left Mesopotamia, and was succeeded as Patriarch by his nephew Ishaii, then a boy of 12 or 13, since educated at St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, and now back again amongst the remnants of his people in the Mosul Province.

In the late spring of 1919 we hoped it might be possible to repatriate the Assyrian Mountaineers; and I journeyed the 250 miles from Baqubah to Mosul, the last 120 miles of which were by motor, in order to go into the matter on the spot with General Fraser, then commanding there. During my stay of several days, I had an opportunity of seeing something of the remains of Nineveh, the once famous city now lying beneath grassy mounds on the opposite bank of the Tigris. My return journey to Baqubah was broken for one night in an Indian infantry camp, pitched at Shergat, amid the ruins of ancient Asshur, the original capital of the Assyrians. There deep seams and trenches had been opened out not long before by German excavators, in the rough ground covering the proud city of several thousand years ago.

Unfortunately, our carefully worked-out scheme for the repatriation of the Mountaineers was presently brought to naught, owing to British officers being ambushed by Goyan Kurds to the north-west of Amadia. All transport ear-marked for the Assyrians' move had therefore to be withdrawn for employment on the difficult military operations about to be undertaken against

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Assyrian Maliks, Baqubah Refugee Camp.

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the Kurds. It thus soon became evident, as the hot weather was rapidly approaching, that no move from Baqubah would be possible until the autumn months; so I applied for six months' leave to England in the meanwhile. This was ultimately granted me in June, and I handed over command of the camp to Lieut.-Colonel Cunliffe Owen, of the Royal Artillery; and set forth for Basrah on the 4th, after one of the most interesting experiences of my service.

And here let me digress to say that Britain owes these Assyrians much. The Mountaineer battalions we had trained and reorganized at Baqubah were drafted north to Mosul shortly after I left; and there fought alongside British and Indian troops against the Kurds, everywhere winning golden opinions from the generals under whom they served. Amid the turmoil of the Arab revolt in Mesopotamia, in the summer of 1920, and while the Assyrian Contingent were still absent in the north, guarding the frontier against Turk and Kurd forays, those left behind at Baqubah successfully beat back repeated attacks by Arab insurgents. Subsequently the camp there was broken up, and during the past six or seven years the remnants of the Mountaineers have been distributed about the Mosul province, and have suffered severely from malaria, since they are unaccustomed to dwelling in lowlands. And there they are to-day, leading a most precarious existence behind the so-called Brussels Line.

The longing eyes of the few survivors can thence gaze, it is true, upon the higher mountains of Hakkiari, amid which remain the ruins of their former beloved homes. But these now, alas! are in the occupation of their hereditary foes, the Turks and Kurds. And yet, the Assyrians fought upon the winning side in the Great War!

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That must surely seem a bewildering and incomprehensible state of affairs to those who risked their all, and lost it, in aiding the Allies to defeat their enemies. They may, indeed, wonder if they would not have done better for themselves, had they fought against us; for this enormity is one of the weakest points of British policy in the Middle East since the Peace. We have deliberately sacrificed our gallant Christian friends, to the advantage of their age-long Moslem persecutors. But, despite this injustice, several thousands of these Assyrian stalwarts are still loyally serving in the Iraq Levies, and doing splendid work in guarding her frontiers against encroachments by Turks and Kurds.

But to resume my story. A great gathering of the Refugees assembled at the Baqubah Station to bid me good-bye, and most of the 1,000 children from our Orphanage lined the rails, and cheered so lustily when the train steamed out, that I felt deeply moved by this display of regard for their departing Commandant. Travelling by rail to Kut, I there boarded the fastest steamer on the river, S. 1, which landed me at Basrah early on the 6th, and enabled me to sail on the *Aronda* for Bombay next day.

The *Ekma*, originally bound for Marseilles, left Bombay on June 16th, and encountered a most unpleasant monsoon as far as Aden. On arrival at Suez, however, she was ordered back to Bombay, so all troops aboard had to disembark and proceed by train to Port Said; and there we were stuck for several days before continuing the voyage in the *Danube* on the last one of June. Three days later Taranto was reached; and thence the three generals on board were granted facilities for travelling home by a *Rapide*, via Rome and Paris. As on the way out, the journey had to be broken at the two capitals, en route to Havre, and we crossed from that port to Southampton during the night of the 8th–9th July.

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On my arrival at Bournemouth a few hours later, I was presented to yet another stranger, a daughter, in fact, then fifteen months old; whilst my two small sons had grown almost beyond recognition during the past two years.

In the summer of 1900, when at home for a few months between two of my African expeditions, it was my great good fortune to be summoned to Osborne to receive the D.S.O., for work in Africa, at the hands of Queen Victoria herself. The two other officers, Mansel-Jones and Robertson, sharing this honour with me that day were both subalterns, who had lately won the V.C. in the South African War, and had been invalided to England, severely wounded whilst performing their signal acts of valour. I could not but feel, therefore, that I was unworthy to attend this private investiture in such distinguished company.

We three travelled from London to Cowes together, and found rooms engaged for us at the Royal Marine Hotel, where we changed into uniform, and were then driven in one of the Royal carriages to Osborne. Sir Arthur Bigge (now Lord Stamfordham) there kindly looked after us until lunch was announced; and to this we sat down with some twenty ladies and gentlemen of the Queen's household at one long table. Barely had we finished when a message was brought in to say that Her Majesty would now receive those to be invested.

We were accordingly conducted one by one, and beginning with the V.C.'s, into the Royal presence. The Lord Chamberlain there read out an account of the acts for which the decorations were awarded, whilst we knelt before the aged Queen. She then attached them to our breasts, after which we kissed her hand. In the case of Mansel-Jones, on crutches, however, Her Majesty graciously stood up to hook on his V.C., and

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addressed a few words of sympathy to him on his sadly disabled condition.

Two years later the C.M.G., for further work in Africa, was bestowed upon me by King Edward, at one of his big Investitures held in St. James's Palace at the close of the South African War. And now, on my return from Mesopotamia, it was my treasured privilege to receive the C.B. from yet another British Sovereign, King George, at an open-air Investiture held in the courtyard of Buckingham Palace, in the summer of 1919.

Still, the rapid demobilization of Britain's widely dispersed armies affected my future adversely; for in the course of the next few months I learned my services would no longer be required in Mesopotamia, at the end of my leave. As I had not previously elected to take permanent Indian service, India then much regretted she could find no further employment for me out in that country; while the War Office equally regretted its inability to provide me with some home appointment, as it had to look first after the interests of those who had clung to British service throughout their careers. It seemed therefore that, in seeing something of the world, I had fallen between two stools; so I hung up my hat in the hall, and joined the great army of Unemployed on April 9th, 1920.

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